POEMS,

BY

WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.

VOL. II.

February 1, 1786.

PROPOSALS

FOR PRINTING BY SUBSCRIPTION,

A NEW TRANSLATION

OF THE

ILIAD AND ODYSSEY

OF

HOMER,

INTO BLANK VERSE.

By W. COWPER,

OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ.



CONDITIONS.

I. The Work will be printed on a new Letter, in two large Volumes in Quarto.

II. The Price will be Three Guineas for the Royal Paper, and two Guineas for the Common Paper, in boards; half to be paid at the time of subscribing, and the other half on delivery of the work, which will be put to press as soon as Three Hundred Subscribers have sent in their names.

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POEMS,

BY

WILLIAM COWPER,

OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CONTAINING

The TASK.

An EPISTLE to JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

TIROCINIUM, or a REVIEW of SCHOOLS.

AND

The HISTORY of JOHN GILPIN.

Fit surculus arbor. ANONYM.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE hiſtory of the following production is briefly this. A lady, fond of blank verſe, demanded a poem of that kind from the author, and gave him the SOFA for a ſubject. He obeyed; and having much leiſure, connected another ſubject with it; and purſuing the train of thought to which his ſituation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, inſtead of the trifle which he at firſt intended, a ſerious affair—a Volume.

In the poem, on the ſubject of Education, he would be very ſorry to ſtand ſuſpected of having aimed his cenſure at any particular ſchool. His objections are ſuch as naturally apply themſelves to ſchools in general. If there were not, as for the moſt part there is, wilful neglect in thoſe who manage them, and an omiſſion even of ſuch diſcipline

cipline as they are ſuſceptible of, the objects are yet too numerous for minute attention; and the aching hearts of ten thouſand parents mourning under the bittereſt of all diſappointments, atteſt the truth of the allegation. His quarrel therefore is with the miſchief at large, and not with any particular inſtance of it.

THE

THE

TASK.

BOOK I.

ARGUMENT of the FIRST BOOK.

Hiſtorical deduction of ſeats, from the ſtool to the Sofa.—A ſchool-boy's ramble.—A walk in the country.—The ſcene deſcribed.—Rural ſounds as well as ſights delightful.—Another walk.—Miſtake concerning the charms of ſolitude, corrected.—Colonnades commended.—Alcove and the view from it.—The Wilderneſs.—The Grove.—The Threſher.—The neceſſity and the benefits of exerciſe.—The works of nature ſuperior to and in ſome inſtances inimitable by art.—The wearineſs of what is commonly called a life of pleaſure.—Change of ſcene ſometimes expedient.—A common deſcribed, and the character of crazy Kate introduced upon it.—Gipſies.—The bleſſings of civilized life.—That ſtate moſt favourable to virtue.—The South Sea Iſlanders compaſſionated, but chiefly Omai.—His preſent ſtate of mind ſuppoſed.—Civilized life friendly to virtue, but not great cities.—Great cities, and London in particular, allowed their due praiſe, but cenſured.—Fete Champetre.—The book concludes with a reflection on the fatal effects of diſſipation and effeminacy upon our public meaſures.

THE TASK.

BOOK I.

THE SOFA.

I SING the Sofa. I who lately ſang
Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touch'd with awe
The ſolemn chords, and with a trembling hand,
Eſcap'd with pain from that advent'rous flight,
Now ſeek repoſe upon an humbler theme;
The theme though humble, yet auguſt and proud
Th' occaſion—for the Fair commands the ſong.

Time was, when cloathing ſumptuous or for uſe,
Save their own painted ſkins, our ſires had none.
As yet black breeches were not, ſattin ſmooth,

Or velvet ſoft, or pluſh with ſhaggy pile:
The hardy chief upon the rugged rock
Waſh'd by the ſea, or on the grav'ly bank
Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,
Fearleſs of wrong, repos'd his weary ſtrength.
Thoſe barb'rous ages paſt, ſucceeded next
The birth-day of invention, weak at firſt,
Dull in deſign, and clumſy to perform.
Joint-ſtools were then created; on three legs
Upborne they ſtood. Three legs upholding firm
A maſſy ſlab, in faſhion ſquare or round.
On ſuch a ſtool immortal Alfred ſat,
And ſway'd the ſceptre of his infant realms;
And ſuch in ancient halls and manſions drear
May ſtill be ſeen, but perforated ſore
And drill'd in holes the ſolid oak is found,
By worms voracious eating through and through.

At length a generation more refined
Improv'd the ſimple plan, made three legs four,

Gave

Gave them a twiſted form vermicular,
And o'er the ſeat with plenteous wadding ſtuff'd
Induced a ſplendid cover green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapeſtry richly wrought
And woven cloſe, or needle-work ſublime.
There might ye ſee the piony ſpread wide,
The full-blown roſe, the ſhepherd and his laſs,
Lap-dog and lambkin with black ſtaring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.

Now came the cane from India, ſmooth and bright
With Nature's yarniſh; ſever'd into ſtripes
That interlaced each other, theſe ſupplied
Of texture firm a lattice-work, that braced
The new machine, and it became a chair.
But reſtleſs was the chair; the back erect
Diſtreſs'd the weary loins that felt no eaſe;
The ſlipp'ry ſeat betray'd the ſliding part
That preſs'd it, and the feet hung dangling down,
Anxious in vain to find the diſtant floor.

Theſe for the rich: the reſt, whom fate had placed
In modeſt mediocrity, content
With baſe materials, ſat on well-tann'd hides
Obdurate and unyielding, glaſſy ſmooth,
With here and there a tuft of crimſon yarn,
Or ſcarlet crewel in the cuſhion fixt:
If cuſhion might be call'd, what harder ſeem'd
Than the firm oak of which the frame was form'd.
No want of timber then was felt or fear'd
In Albion's happy iſle. The umber ſtood
Pond'rous, and fixt by its own maſſy weight.
But elbows ſtill were wanting; theſe, ſome ſay,
An Alderman of Cripplegate contrived,
And ſome aſcribe the invention to a prieſt
Burly and big and ſtudious of his eaſe.
But rude at firſt, and not with eaſy ſlope
Receding wide, they preſs'd againſt the ribs,
And bruiſed the ſide, and elevated high
Taught the rais'd ſhoulders to invade the ears.
Long time elapſed or e'er our rugged ſires

Complain'd

Complain'd, though incommodiouſly pent in,
And ill at eaſe behind. The Ladies firſt
'Gan murmur, as became the ſofter ſex.
Ingenious fancy, never better pleas'd
Than when employ'd t' accommodate the fair,
Heard the ſweet moan with pity, and deviſed
The ſoft ſettee; one elbow at each end,
And in the midſt an elbow, it receiv'd
United yet divided, twain at once.
So ſit two Kings of Brentford on one throne;
And ſo two citizens who take the air
Cloſe pack'd and ſmiling in a chaiſe and one.
But relaxation of the languid frame
By ſoft recumbency of outſtretched limbs,
Was bliſs reſerved for happier days. So ſlow
The growth of what is excellent, ſo hard
T' attain perfection in this nether world.
Thus firſt neceſſity invented ſtools,
Convenience next ſuggeſted elbow chairs,
And luxury th' accompliſhed Sofa laſt.

The nurſe ſleeps ſweetly, hired to watch the ſick
Whom ſnoring ſhe diſturbs. As ſweetly he
Who quits the coach-box at the midnight hour
To ſleep within the carriage more ſecure,
His legs depending at the open door.
Sweet ſleep enjoys the Curate in his deſk,
The tedious Rector drawling o'er his head,
And ſweet the Clerk below: but neither ſleep
Of lazy Nurſe, who ſnores the ſick man dead,
Nor his who quits the box at midnight hour
To ſlumber in the carriage more ſecure,
Nor ſleep enjoy'd by Curate in his deſk,
Nor yet the dozings of the Clerk are ſweet,
Compared with the repoſe the SOFA yields.

Oh may I live exempted (while I live
Guiltleſs of pamper'd appetite obſcene)
From pangs arthritic that infeſt the toe
Of libertine exceſs. The SOFA ſuits
The gouty limb, 'tis true; but gouty limb

Though

Though on a Sofa, may I never feel:
For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
Of graſſy ſwarth cloſe cropt by nibbling ſheep,
And ſkirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs: have loved the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers brink,
E'er ſince a truant boy I paſs'd my bounds
T' enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames.
And ſtill remember, nor without regret
Of hours that ſorrow ſince has much endear'd,
How oft, my ſlice of pocket ſtore conſumed,
Still hung'ring pennyleſs and far from home,
I fed on ſcarlet hips and ſtony haws,
Or bluſhing crabs, or berries that imboſs
The bramble, black as jet, or ſloes auſtere.
Hard fare! but ſuch as boyiſh appetite
Diſdains not, nor the palate undepraved
By culinary arts unſav'ry deems.
No Sofa then awaited my return,
Nor Sofa then I needed. Youth repairs

His waſted ſpirits quickly, by long toil
Incurring ſhort fatigue; and though our years
As life declines, ſpeed rapidly away,
And not a year but pilfers as he goes
Some youthful grace that age would gladly keep,
A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees
Their length and color from the locks they ſpare;
Th' elaſtic ſpring of an unwearied foot
That mounts the ſtile with eaſe, or leaps the fence,
That play of lungs inhaling and again
Reſpiring freely the freſh air, that makes
Swift pace or ſteep aſcent no toil to me,
Mine have not pilfer'd yet; nor yet impair'd
My reliſh of fair proſpect; ſcenes that ſooth'd
Or charm'd me young, no longer young, I find
Still ſoothing and of power to charm me ſtill.
And witneſs, dear companion of my walks,
Whoſe arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Faſt lock'd in mine, with pleaſure ſuch as love
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth

And

And well-tried virtues could alone inſpire—
Witneſs a joy that thou haſt doubled long.
Thou know'ſt my praiſe of nature moſt ſincere,
And that my raptures are not conjured up
To ſerve occaſions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence, our pace
Has ſlacken'd to a pauſe, and we have borne
The ruffling wind ſcarce conſcious that it blew,
While admiration feeding at the eye,
And ſtill unſated, dwelt upon the ſcene!
Thence with what pleaſure have we juſt diſcern'd
The diſtant plough ſlow-moving, and beſide
His lab'ring team that ſwerv'd not from the track,
The ſturdy ſwain diminiſh'd to a boy!
Here Ouſe, ſlow winding through a level plain
Of ſpacious meads with cattle ſprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his ſinuous courſe
Delighted. There, faſt rooted in his bank
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms

That

That ſcreen the herdſman's ſolitary hut;
While far beyond and overthwart the ſtream
That as with molten glaſs inlays the vale,
The ſloping land recedes into the clouds;
Diſplaying on its varied ſide, the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberleſs, ſquare tow'r,
Tall ſpire, from which the ſound of chearful bells
Juſt undulates upon the liſt'ning ear;
Groves, heaths, and ſmoking villages remote.
Scenes muſt be beautiful which daily view'd
Pleaſe daily, and whoſe novelty ſurvives
Long knowledge and the ſcrutiny of years.
Praiſe juſtly due to thoſe that I deſcribe.

Nor rural ſights alone, but rural ſounds
Exhilarate the ſpirit, and reſtore
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds
That ſweep the ſkirt of ſome far-ſpreading wood
Of ancient growth, make muſic not unlike
The daſh of ocean on his winding ſhore,

And

And lull the ſpirit while they fill the mind,
Unnumber'd branches waving in the blaſt,
And all their leaves faſt flutt'ring, all at once.
Nor leſs compoſure waits upon the roar
Of diſtant floods, or on the ſofter voice
Of neighb'ring fountain, or of rills that ſlip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon looſe pebbles, loſe themſelves at length
In matted graſs, that with a livelier green
Betrays the ſecret of their ſilent courſe.
Nature inanimate employs ſweet ſounds,
But animated Nature ſweeter ſtill
To ſooth and ſatisfy the human ear.
Ten thouſand warblers cheer the day, and one
The live-long night: nor theſe alone whoſe notes
Nice-finger'd art muſt emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that ſwim ſublime
In ſtill repeated circles, ſcreaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and ev'n the boding owl
That hails the riſing moon, have charms for me.

Sounds inharmonious in themſelves and harſh,
Yet heard in ſcenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, pleaſe highly for their ſake.

Peace to the artiſt, whoſe ingenious thought
Deviſed the weather-houſe, that uſeful toy!
Fearleſs of humid air and gathering rains
Forth ſteps the man, an emblem of myſelf,
More delicate his tim'rous mate retires.
When Winter ſoaks the fields, and female feet
Too weak to ſtruggle with tenacious clay,
Or ford the rivulets, are beſt at home,
The taſk of new diſcov'ries falls on me.
At ſuch a ſeaſon and with ſuch a charge
Once went I forth, and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we ſince repair:
'Tis perch'd upon the green-hill top, but cloſe
Inviron'd with a ring of branching elms
That overhang the thatch, itſelf unſeen,
Peeps at the vale below; ſo thick beſet

With

With foliage of ſuch dark redundant growth,
I call'd the low-roof'd lodge the *peaſant's neſt*.
And hidden as it is, and far remote
From ſuch unpleaſing ſounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Inceſſant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clam'rous whether pleas'd or pain'd,
Oft have I wiſh'd the peaceful covert mine.
Here, I have ſaid, at leaſt I ſhould poſſeſs
The poet's treaſure, ſilence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and ſecure.
Vain thought! the dweller in that ſtill retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated ſcite forbids the wretch
To drink ſweet waters of the chryſtal well;
He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And heavy-laden brings his bev'rage home
Far-fetch'd and little worth; nor ſeldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,

Angry

Angry and ſad and his laſt cruſt conſumed.
So farewel envy of the *peaſant's neſt*.
If ſolitude make ſcant the means of life,
Society for me! Thou ſeeming ſweet,
Be ſtill a pleaſing object in my view,
My viſit ſtill, but never mine abode.

Not diſtant far, a length of colonnade
Invites us. Monument of ancient taſte,
Now ſcorn'd, but worthy of a better fate.
Our fathers knew the value of a ſcreen
From ſultry ſuns, and in their ſhaded walks
And long-protracted bow'rs, enjoy'd at noon
The gloom and coolneſs of declining day.
We bear our ſhades about us; ſelf-depriv'd
Of other ſcreen, the thin umbrella ſpread,
And range an Indian waſte without a tree.
Thanks to *Benevolus—he ſpares me yet

* John Courtney Throckmorton, Eſq. of Weſton Underwood.

Theſe

Theſe cheſnuts ranged in correſponding lines,
And though himſelf ſo poliſh'd, ſtill reprieves
The obſolete prolixity of ſhade.

Deſcending now (but cautious, leſt too faſt)
A ſudden ſteep, upon a ruſtic bridge
We paſs a gulph in which the willows dip
Their pendent boughs, ſtooping as if to drink.
Hence ancle deep in moſs and flow'ry thyme
We mount again, and feel at ev'ry ſtep
Our foot half ſunk in hillocks green and ſoft,
Rais'd by the mole, the miner of the ſoil.
He not unlike the great ones of mankind,
Disfigures earth, and plotting in the dark
Toils much to earn a monumental pile,
That may record the miſchiefs he has done.

The ſummit gain'd, behold the proud alcove
That crowns it! yet not all its pride ſecures
The grand retreat from injuries impreſs'd

By rural carvers, who with knives deface
The pannels, leaving an obſcure rude name
In characters uncouth, and ſpelt amiſs.
So ſtrong the zeal t' immortalize himſelf
Beats in the breaſt of man, that ev'n a few
Few tranſient years won from th' abyſs abhorr'd
Of blank oblivion, ſeem a glorious prize,
And even to a clown. Now roves the eye,
And poſted on this ſpeculative height
Exults in its command. The ſheep-fold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At firſt, progreſſive as a ſtream, they ſeek
The middle field; but ſcatter'd by degrees
Each to his choice, ſoon whiten all the land.
There, from the ſun-burnt hay-field homeward creeps
The loaded wain, while lighten'd of its charge
The wain that meets it paſſes ſwiftly by,
The booriſh driver leaning o'er his team
Vocif'rous, and impatient of delay.
Nor leſs attractive is the woodland ſcene

Diverſified

Diverſified with trees of ev'ry growth
Alike yet various. Here the grey ſmooth trunks
Of aſh, or lime, or beech, diſtinctly ſhine,
Within the twilight of their diſtant ſhades;
There loſt behind a riſing ground, the wood
Seems ſunk, and ſhorten'd to its topmoſt boughs.
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Though each its hue peculiar; paler ſome,
And of a wanniſh grey; the willow ſuch
And poplar, that with ſilver lines his leaf,
And aſh far-ſtretching his umbrageous arm.
Of deeper green the elm; and deeper ſtill,
Lord of the woods, the long-ſurviving oak.
Some gloſſy-leav'd and ſhining in the ſun,
The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve
Diffuſing odors: nor unnoted paſs
The ſycamore, capricious in attire,
Now green, now tawny, and ere autumn yet
Have changed the woods, in ſcarlet honors bright.

O'er theſe, but far beyond, (a ſpacious map
Of hill and valley interpos'd between)
The Ouſe, dividing the well-water'd land,
Now glitters in the ſun, and now retires,
As baſhful, yet impatient to be ſeen.

Hence the declivity is ſharp and ſhort,
And ſuch the re-aſcent; between them weeps
A little Naiad her impov'riſh'd urn
All ſummer long, which winter fills again.
The folded gates would bar my progreſs now,
But that the * Lord of this incloſed demeſne,
Communicative of the good he owns,
Admits me to a ſhare: the guiltleſs eye
Commits no wrong, nor waſtes what it enjoys.
Refreſhing change! where now the blazing ſun?
By ſhort tranſition we have loſt his glare
And ſtepp'd at once into a cooler clime.
Ye fallen avenues! once more I mourn

* See the foregoing note.

Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice
That yet a remnant of your race ſurvives.
How airy and how light the graceful arch,
Yet awful as the conſecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems! while beneath
The chequer'd earth ſeems reſtleſs as a flood
Bruſh'd by the wind. So ſportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and ſunſhine intermingling quick,
And dark'ning and enlight'ning, as the leaves
Play wanton, ev'ry moment, ev'ry ſpot.

And now with nerves new-brac'd and ſpirits chear'd
We tread the wilderneſs, whoſe well-roll'd walks
With curvature of ſlow and eaſy ſweep,
Deception innocent—give ample ſpace
To narrow bounds. The grove receives us next;
Between the upright ſhafts of whoſe tall elms
We may diſcern the threſher at his taſk.
Thump after thump, reſounds the conſtant flail,

That ſeems to ſwing uncertain, and yet falls
Full on the deſtin'd ear. Wide flies the chaff,
The ruſtling ſtraw ſends up a frequent miſt
Of atoms ſparkling in the noon-day beam.
Come hither, ye that preſs your beds of down
And ſleep not: ſee him ſweating o'er his bread
Before he eats it.—'Tis the primal curſe,
But ſoften'd into mercy; made the pledge
Of chearful days, and nights without a groan.

By ceaſeleſs action, all that is, ſubſiſts.
Conſtant rotation of th' unwearied wheel
That nature rides upon, maintains her health,
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads
An inſtant's pauſe, and lives but while ſhe moves.
Its own revolvency upholds the world.
Winds from all quarters agitate the air,
And fit the limpid element for uſe,
Elſe noxious: oceans, rivers, lakes, and ſtreams
All feel the freſh'ning impulſe, and are cleanſed

By reſtleſs undulation; ev'n the oak
Thrives by the rude concuſſion of the ſtorm;
He ſeems indeed indignant, and to feel
Th' impreſſion of the blaſt with proud diſdain,
Frowning as if in his unconſcious arm
He held the thunder. But the monarch owes
His firm ſtability to what he ſcorns,
More fixt below, the more diſturb'd above.
The law by which all creatures elſe are bound,
Binds man the lord of all. Himſelf derives
No mean advantage from a kindred cauſe,
From ſtrenuous toil his hours of ſweeteſt eaſe.
The ſedentary ſtretch their lazy length
When cuſtom bids, but no refreſhment find,
For none they need: the languid eye, the cheek
Deſerted of its bloom, the flaccid, ſhrunk,
And wither'd muſcle, and the vapid ſoul,
Reproach their owner with that love of reſt
To which he forfeits ev'n the reſt he loves.
Not ſuch th' alert and active. Meaſure life

By its true worth, the comforts it affords,
And theirs alone ſeems worthy of the name.
Good health, and its aſſociate in the moſt,
Good temper; ſpirits prompt to undertake,
And not ſoon ſpent, though in an arduous taſk;
The pow'rs of fancy and ſtrong thought are theirs;
Ev'n age itſelf ſeems privileged in them
With clear exemption from its own defects.
A ſparkling eye beneath a wrinkled front
The yet'ran ſhows, and gracing a grey beard
With youthful ſmiles, deſcends toward the grave
Sprightly, and old almoſt without decay.

Like a coy maiden, eaſe, when courted moſt,
Fartheſt retires—an idol, at whoſe ſhrine
Who oft'neſt ſacrifice are favor'd leaſt.
The love of Nature, and the ſcenes ſhe draws
Is Nature's dictate. Strange! there ſhould be found
Who ſelf-impriſon'd in their proud ſaloons,
Renounce the odors of the open field

For the unſcented fictions of the loom.
Who ſatisfied with only pencil'd ſcenes,
Prefer to the performance of a God
Th' inferior wonders of an artiſt's hand.
Lovely indeed the mimic works of art,
But Nature's works far lovelier. I admire—
None more admires the painter's magic ſkill,
Who ſhews me that which I ſhall never ſee,
Conveys a diſtant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on Engliſh walls.
But imitative ſtrokes can do no more
Than pleaſe the eye, ſweet Nature ev'ry ſenſe.
The air ſalubrious of her lofty hills,
The chearing fragrance of her dewy vales
And muſic of her woods—no works of man
May rival theſe; theſe all beſpeak a power
Peculiar, and excluſively her own.
Beneath the open ſky ſhe ſpreads the feaſt;
'Tis free to all—'tis ev'ry day renew'd,
Who ſcorns it, ſtarves deſervedly at home.

He does not ſcorn it, who impriſon'd long
In ſome unwholeſome dungeon, and a prey
To ſallow ſickneſs, which the vapors dank
And clammy of his dark abode have bred,
Eſcapes at laſt to liberty and light.
His cheek recovers ſoon its healthful hue,
His eye relumines its extinguiſh'd fires,
He walks, he leaps, he runs—is wing'd with joy,
And riots in the ſweets of ev'ry breeze.
He does not ſcorn it, who has long endur'd
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.
Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflamed
With acrid ſalts; his very heart athirſt
To gaze at Nature in her green array.
Upon the ſhip's tall ſide he ſtands, poſſeſs'd
With viſions prompted by intenſe deſire;
Fair fields appear below, ſuch as he left
Far diſtant, ſuch as he would die to find—
He ſeeks them headlong, and is ſeen no more.

The

The ſpleen is ſeldom felt where Flora reigns;
The low'ring eye, the petulance, the frown,
And ſullen ſadneſs that o'erſhade, diſtort,
And mar the face of beauty, when no cauſe
For ſuch immeaſurable woe appears,
Theſe Flora baniſhes, and gives the fair
Sweet ſmiles and bloom leſs tranſient than her own.
It is the conſtant revolution ſtale
And taſteleſs, of the ſame repeated joys,
That palls and ſatiates, and makes languid life
A pedlar's pack, that bows the bearer down.
Health ſuffers, and the ſpirits ebb; the heart
Recoils from its own choice—at the full feaſt
Is famiſh'd—finds no muſic in the ſong,
No ſmartneſs in the jeſt, and wonders why.
Yet thouſands ſtill deſire to journey on,
Though halt and weary of the path they tread.
The paralytic who can hold her cards
But cannot play them, borrows a friend's hand
To deal and ſhuffle, to divide and ſort

Her mingled ſuits and ſequences, and ſits
Spectatreſs both and ſpectacle, a ſad
And ſilent cypher, while her proxy plays.
Others are dragg'd into the crowded room
Between ſupporters; and once ſeated, ſit
Through downright inability to riſe,
'Till the ſtout bearers lift the corpſe again.
Theſe ſpeak a loud memento. Yet ev'n theſe
Themſelves love life, and cling to it, as he
That overhangs a torrent, to a twig.
They love it, and yet loath it; fear to die,
Yet ſcorn the purpoſes for which they live.
Then wherefore not renounce them? No—the dread,
The ſlaviſh dread of ſolitude, that breeds
Reflection and remorſe, the fear of ſhame,
And their invet'rate habits, all forbid.

Whom call we gay? That honor has been long
The boaſt of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay—the lark is gay

That dries his feathers ſaturate with dew
Beneath the roſy cloud, while yet the beams
Of day-ſpring overſhoot his humble neſt.
The peaſant too, a witneſs of his ſong,
Himſelf a ſongſter, is as gay as he.
But ſave me from the gaiety of thoſe
Whoſe head-achs nail them to a noon-day bed;
And ſave me too from theirs whoſe haggard eyes
Flaſh deſperation, and betray their pangs
For property ſtripp'd off by cruel chance;
From gaiety that fills the bones with pain,
The mouth with blaſphemy, the heart with woe.

The earth was made ſo various, that the mind
Of deſultory man, ſtudious of change,
And pleas'd with novelty, might be indulged.
Proſpects however lovely may be ſeen
'Till half their beauties fade; the weary ſight,
Too well acquainted with their ſmiles, ſlides off
Faſtidious, ſeeking leſs familiar ſcenes.

Then

Then ſnug incloſures in the ſhelter'd vale,
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,
Delight us, happy to renounce a while,
Not ſenſeleſs of its charms, what ſtill we love,
That ſuch ſhort abſence may endear it more.
Then foreſts, or the ſavage rock may pleaſe,
That hides the ſea-mew in his hollow cleſts
Above the reach of man: his hoary head
Conſpicuous many a league, the mariner
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greets with three cheers exulting. At his waiſt
A girdle of half-wither'd ſhrubs he ſhows,
And at his feet the baffled billows die.
The common overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly goſs, that ſhapeleſs and deform
And dang'rous to the touch, has yet its bloom
And decks itſelf with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleaſing ramble; there the turf
Smells freſh, and rich in odorif'rous herbs

And fungous fruits of earth, regales the ſenſe
With luxury of unexpected ſweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days
Saw better clad, in cloak of ſattin trimm'd
With lace, and hat with ſplendid ribband bound.
A ſerving-maid was ſhe, and fell in love
With one who left her, went to ſea and died.
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves
To diſtant ſhores, and ſhe would ſit and weep
At what a ſailor ſuffers; fancy too,
Deluſive moſt where warmeſt wiſhes are,
Would oft anticipate his glad return,
And dream of tranſports ſhe was not to know.
She heard the doleful tidings of his death,
And never ſmil'd again. And now ſhe roams
The dreary waſte; there ſpends the livelong day,
And there, unleſs when charity forbids,
The livelong night. A tatter'd apron hides,
Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides a gown

More tatter'd ſtill; and both but ill conceal
A boſom heaved with never-ceaſing ſighs.
She begs an idle pin of all ſhe meets,
And hoards them in her ſleeve; but needful food,
Though preſs'd with hunger oft, or comelier cloaths,
Though pinch'd with cold, aſks never.—Kate is craz'd.

I ſee a column of ſlow-riſing ſmoke
O'ertop the lofty wood that ſkirts the wild.
A vagabond and uſeleſs tribe there eat
Their miſerable meal. A kettle ſlung
Between two poles upon a ſtick tranſverſe,
Receives the morſel; fleſh obſcene of dog,
Or vermin, or at beſt, of cock purloin'd
From his accuſtom'd perch. Hard-faring race!
They pick their fuel out of ev'ry hedge,
Which kindled with dry leaves, juſt ſaves unquench'd
The ſpark of life. The ſportive wind blows wide
Their flutt'ring rags, and ſhows a tawny ſkin,
The vellum of the pedigree they claim.

Great

Great ſkill have they in palmiſtry, and more
To conjure clean away the gold they touch,
Conveying worthleſs droſs into its place.
Loud when they beg, dumb only when they ſteal.
Strange! that a creature rational, and caſt
In human mould, ſhould brutalize by choice
His nature, and though capable of arts
By which the world might profit and himſelf,
Self-baniſh'd from ſociety, prefer
Such ſqualid ſloth to honorable toil.
Yet even theſe, though feigning ſickneſs oft
They ſwathe the forehead, drag the limping limb
And vex their fleſh with artificial ſores,
Can change their whine into a mirthful note
When ſafe occaſion offers, and with dance
And muſic of the bladder and the bag
Beguile their woes and make the woods reſound.
Such health and gaiety of heart enjoy
The houſeleſs rovers of the ſylvan world;
And breathing wholeſome air, and wand'ring much,

Need

Need other phyſic none to heal th' effects
Of loathſome diet, penury, and cold.

Bleſt he, though undiſtinguiſh'd from the crowd
By wealth or dignity, who dwells ſecure
Where man, by nature fierce, has laid aſide
His fierceneſs, having learnt, though ſlow to learn,
The manners and the arts of civil life.
His wants, indeed, are many; but ſupply
Is obvious; placed within the eaſy reach
Of temp'rate wiſhes and induſtrious hands.
Here virtue thrives as in her proper ſoil;
Not rude and ſurly, and beſet with thorns,
And terrible to ſight, as when ſhe ſprings,
(If e'er ſhe ſpring ſpontaneous) in remote
And barb'rous climes, where violence prevails,
And ſtrength is lord of all; but gentle, kind,
By culture tam'd, by liberty refreſh'd,
And all her fruits by radiant truth matur'd.
War and the chace engroſs the ſavage whole.

War

War follow'd for revenge, or to ſupplant
The envied tenants of ſome happier ſpot,
The chace for ſuſtenance, precarious truſt!
His hard condition with ſevere conſtraint
Binds all his faculties, forbids all growth
Of wiſdom, proves a ſchool in which he learns
Sly circumvention, unrelenting hate,
Mean ſelf-attachment, and ſcarce aught beſide.
Thus fare the ſhiv'ring natives of the north,
And thus the rangers of the weſtern world
Where it advances far into the deep,
Towards th' Antarctic. Ev'n the favor'd iſles
So lately found, although the conſtant ſun
Cheer all their ſeaſons with a grateful ſmile,
Can boaſt but little virtue; and inert
Through plenty, loſe in morals, what they gain
In manners, victims of luxurious eaſe.
Theſe therefore I can pity, placed remote
From all that ſcience traces, art invents,
Or inſpiration teaches; and incloſed

In boundleſs oceans never to be paſs'd
By navigators uninformed as they,
Or plough'd perhaps by Britiſh bark again.
But far beyond the reſt, and with moſt cauſe
Thee, gentle * ſavage! whom no love of thee
Or thine, but curioſity perhaps,
Or elſe vain-glory, prompted us to draw
Forth from thy native bow'rs, to ſhow thee here
With what ſuperior ſkill we can abuſe
The gifts of providence, and ſquander life.
The dream is paſt. And thou haſt found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homeſtall thatch'd with leaves. But haſt thou fou
Their former charms? And having ſeen our ſtate,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens, and our ſports,
And heard our muſic; are thy ſimple friends,
Thy ſimple fare, and all thy plain delights
As dear to thee as once? And have thy joys
Loſt nothing by compariſon with ours?

* Omai.

Rude as thou art (for we return'd thee rude
And ignorant, except of outward ſhow)
I cannot think thee yet ſo dull of heart
And ſpiritleſs, as never to regret
Sweets taſted here, and left as ſoon as known.
Methinks I ſee thee ſtraying on the beach,
And aſking of the ſurge that bathes thy foot
If ever it has waſh'd our diſtant ſhore.
I ſee thee weep, and thine are honeſt tears,
A patriot's for his country. Thou art ſad
At thought of her forlorn and abject ſtate,
From which no power of thine can raiſe her up.
Thus fancy paints thee, and though apt to err,
Perhaps errs little, when ſhe paints thee thus.
She tells me too that duly ev'ry morn
Thou climb'ſt the mountain top, with eager eye
Exploring far and wide the wat'ry waſte
For ſight of ſhip from England. Ev'ry ſpeck
Seen in the dim horizon, turns thee pale
With conflict of contending hopes and fears.

But comes at laſt the dull and duſky eve,
And ſends thee to thy cabbin, well-prepar'd
To dream all night of what the day denied.
Alas! expect it not. We found no bait
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,
Diſintereſted good, is not our trade.
We travel far 'tis true, but not for nought;
And muſt be brib'd to compaſs earth again
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.

But though true worth and virtue, in the mild
And genial ſoil of cultivated life
Thrive moſt, and may perhaps thrive only there,
Yet not in cities oft. In proud and gay
And gain-devoted cities; thither flow,
As to a common and moſt noiſome ſewer,
The dregs and fæculence of ev'ry land.
In cities foul example on moſt minds
Begets its likeneſs. Rank abundance breeds
In groſs and pamper'd cities ſloth and luſt,

And wantonneſs and gluttonous exceſs.
In cities, vice is hidden with moſt eaſe,
Or ſeen with leaſt reproach; and virtue taught
By frequent lapſe, can hope no triumph there
Beyond th' atchievement of ſucceſsful flight.
I do confeſs them nurs'ries of the arts,
In which they flouriſh moſt. Where in the beams
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
Of public note they reach their perfect ſize.
Such London is, by taſte and wealth proclaim'd
The faireſt capital of all the world,
By riot and incontinence the worſt.
There touch'd by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which nature ſees
All her reflected features. Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a ſtone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.
Nor does the chiſſel occupy alone
The pow'rs of ſculpture, but the ſtyle as much;
Each province of her art her equal care.

With nice inciſion of her guided ſteel
She ploughs a brazen field, and clothes a ſoil
So ſterile with what charms ſoe'er ſhe will,
The richeſt ſcen'ry and the loveliest forms.
Where finds philoſophy her eagle eye
With which ſhe gazes at yon burning diſk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his ſpots?
In London. Where her implements exact
With which ſhe calculates, computes and ſcans
All diſtance, motion, magnitude, and now
Meaſures an atom, and now girds a world?
In London. Where has commerce ſuch a mart,
So rich, ſo throng'd, ſo drain'd, and ſo ſupplied
As London, opulent, enlarged, and ſtill
Increaſing London? Babylon of old
Not more the glory of the earth, than ſhe
A more accompliſh'd world's chief glory now.

She has her praiſe. Now mark a ſpot or two
That ſo much beauty would do well to purge;

And

And ſhow this queen of cities, that ſo fair
May yet be foul, ſo witty, yet not wiſe.
It is not ſeemly, nor of good report
That ſhe is ſlack in diſcipline. More prompt
T' avenge than to prevent the breach of law.
That ſhe is rigid in denouncing death
On petty robbers, and indulges life
And liberty, and oft-times honor too
To peculators of the public gold.
That thieves at home muſt hang; but he that puts
Into his overgorged and bloated purſe
The wealth of Indian provinces, eſcapes.
Nor is it well, nor can it come to good,
That through profane and infidel contempt
Of holy writ, ſhe has preſum'd t' annul
And abrogate, as roundly as ſhe may,
The total ordonnance and will of God;
Advancing faſhion to the poſt of truth,
And cent'ring all authority in modes
And cuſtoms of her own, till ſabbath rites

Have dwindled into unreſpected forms,
And knees and haſſocks are well-nigh divorced.

God made the country, and man made the tow
What wonder then, that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make ſweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, ſhould moſt abound
And leaſt be threatened in the fields and groves?
Poſſeſs ye therefore, ye who borne about
In chariots and ſedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleneſs, and taſte no ſcenes
But ſuch as art contrives, poſſeſs ye ſtill
Your element; there only ye can ſhine,
There only minds like yours can do no harm.
Our groves were planted to conſole at noon
The penſive wand'rer in their ſhades. At eve
The moon-beam ſliding ſoftly in between
The ſleeping leaves, is all the light they wiſh,
Birds warbling all the muſic. We can ſpare
The ſplendor of your lamps, they but eclipſe

Our

Our ſofter ſatellite. Your ſongs confound
Our more harmonious notes. The thruſh departs
Scared, and th' offended nightingale is mute.
There is a public miſchief in your mirth,
It plagues your country. Folly ſuch as yours
Grac'd with a ſword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made, which enemies could ne'er have done,
Our arch of empire, ſtedfaſt but for you,
A mutilated ſtructure, ſoon to fall.

THE TASK.

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT of the SECOND BOOK.

Which opens with reflections ſuggeſted by the concluſion of the former.—Peace among the nations recommended on the ground of their common fellowſhip in ſorrow.—Prodigies enumerated.—Sicilian earthquakes—Man rendered obnoxious to theſe calamities by ſin.—God the agent in them.—The philoſophy that ſtops at ſecondary cauſes, reproved.—Our own late miſcarriages accounted for.—Satyrical notice taken of our trips to Fontainbleau—But the pulpit, not ſatire, the proper engine of reformation.—The Reverend Advertiſer of engraved ſermons.—Petit maitre parſon.—The good preacher.—Picture of a theatrical clerical coxcomb.—Story-tellers and jeſters in the pulpit reproved.—Apoſtrophé to popular applauſe.—Retailers of ancient philoſophy expoſtulated with.—Sum of the whole matter.—Effects of ſacerdotal miſmanagement on the laity.—Their folly and extravagance.—The miſchiefs of profuſion.—Profuſion itſelf, with all its conſequent evils, aſcribed, as to its principal cauſe, to the want of diſcipline in the Univerſities.

THE TASK.

BOOK II.

THE TIME-PIECE.

OH for a lodge in ſome vaſt wilderneſs,
Some boundleſs contiguity of ſhade,
Where rumour of oppreſſion and deceit,
Of unſucceſsful or ſucceſsful war
Might never reach me more. My ear is pain'd,
My ſoul is ſick with ev'ry day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd.
There is no fleſh in man's obdurate heart,
It does not feel for man. The nat'ral bond
Of brotherhood is ſever'd as the flax
That falls aſunder at the touch of fire.

He

He finds his fellow guilty of a ſkin
Not colour'd like his own, and having pow'r
T' inforce the wrong, for ſuch a worthy cauſe
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.
Lands interfected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interpoſed,
Make enemies of nations who had elſe
Like kindred drops been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and deſtroys;
And worſe than all, and moſt to be deplored
As human nature's broadeſt, fouleſt blot,
Chains him, and taſks him, and exacts his ſweat
With ſtripes, that mercy with a bleeding heart
Weeps when ſhe ſees inflicted on a beaſt.
Then what is man? And what man ſeeing this,
And having human feelings, does not bluſh
And hang his head, to think himſelf a man?
I would not have a ſlave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I ſleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That ſinews bought and ſold have ever earn'd.

No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Juſt eſtimation priz'd above all price,
I had much rather be myſelf the ſlave
And wear the bonds, than faſten them on him.
We have no ſlaves at home—Then why abroad?
And they themſelves once ferried o'er the wave
That parts us, are emancipate and loos'd.
Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free,
They touch our country and their ſhackles fall.
That's noble, and beſpeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the bleſſing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through ev'ry vein
Of all your empire. That where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.

Sure there is need of ſocial intercourſe,
Benevolence and peace and mutual aid
Between the nations, in a world that ſeems
To toll the death-bell to its own deceaſe,

And by the voice of all its elements
To preach the gen'ral doom *. When were the winds
Let ſlip with ſuch a warrant to deſtroy,
When did the waves ſo haughtily o'erleap
Their ancient barriers, deludging the dry?
Fires from beneath, and meteors † from above
Portentous, unexampled, unexplained,
Have kindled beacons in the ſkies, and th' old
And crazy earth has had her ſhaking fits
More frequent, and foregone her uſual reſt.
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
And pillars of our planet ſeem to fail,
And Nature ‡ with a dim and ſickly eye
To wait the cloſe of all? But grant her end
More diſtant, and that prophecy demands
A longer reſpite, unaccompliſhed yet;

Still

* Alluding to the late calamities at Jamaica.

† Auguſt 18, 1783.

‡ Alluding to the fog that covered both Europe and Aſia during the whole ſummer of 1783.

Still they are frowning ſignals, and beſpeak
Diſpleaſure in his breaſt who ſmites the earth
Or heals it, makes it languiſh or rejoice.
And 'tis but ſeemly, that where all deſerve
And ſtand expoſed by common peccancy
To what no few have felt, there ſhould be peace,
And brethren in calamity ſhould love.

Alas for Sicily! rude fragments now
Lie ſcatter'd where the ſhapely column ſtood.
Her palaces are duſt. In all her ſtreets
The voice of ſinging and the ſprightly chord
Are ſilent. Revelry and dance and ſhow
Suffer a ſyncope and ſolemn pauſe,
While God performs upon the trembling ſtage
Of his own works, his dreadful part alone.
How does the earth receive him?—With what ſigns
Of gratulation and delight, her king?
Pours ſhe not all her choiceſt fruits abroad,
Her ſweeteſt flow'rs, her aromatic gums,

Diſcloſing paradiſe where'er he treads?
She quakes at his approach. Her hollow womb
Conceiving thunders, through a thouſand deeps
And fiery caverns roars beneath his foot.
The hills move lightly and the mountains ſmoke,
For he has touch'd them. From th' extremeſt poi
Of elevation down into th' abyſs,
His wrath is buſy and his frown is felt.
The rocks fall headlong and the vallies riſe,
The rivers die into offenſive pools,
And charged with putrid verdure, breathe a groſs
And mortal nuiſance into all the air.
What ſolid was, by transformation ſtrange
Grows fluid, and the fixt and rooted earth
Tormented into billows heaves and ſwells,
Or with vortiginous and hideous whirl
Sucks down its prey inſatiable. Immenſe
The tumult and the overthrow, the pangs
And agonies of human and of brute
Multitudes, fugitive on ev'ry ſide,

And fugitive in vain. The ſylvan ſcene
Migrates uplifted, and with all its ſoil
Alighting in far diſtant fields, finds out
A new poſſeſſor, and ſurvives the change.
Ocean has caught the frenzy, and upwrought
To an enormous and o'erbearing height,
Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice
Which winds and waves obey, invades the ſhore
Reſiſtleſs. Never ſuch a ſudden flood,
Upridged ſo high, and ſent on ſuch a charge,
Poſſeſs'd an inland ſcene. Where now the throng
That preſs'd the beach and haſty to depart
Look'd to the ſea for ſafety? They are gone,
Gone with the refluent wave into the deep,
A prince with half his people. Ancient tow'rs,
And roofs embattled high, the gloomy ſcenes
Where beauty oft and letter'd worth conſume
Life in the unproductive ſhades of death,
Fall prone; the pale inhabitants come forth,
And happy in their unforeſeen releaſe

From all the rigors of reſtraint, enjoy
The terrors of the day that ſets them free.
Who then that has thee, would not hold thee faſt
Freedom! whom they that loſe thee, ſo regret,
That ev'n a judgment making way for thee,
Seems in their eyes, a mercy, for thy ſake.

Such evil ſin hath wrought; and ſuch a flame
Kindled in heaven, that it burns down to earth,
And in the furious inqueſt that it makes
On God's behalf, lays waſte his faireſt works.
The very elements, though each be meant
The miniſter of man, to ſerve his wants,
Conſpire againſt him. With his breath, he draws
A plague into his blood. And cannot uſe
Life's neceſſary means, but he muſt die.
Storms riſe t' o'erwhelm him: or if ſtormy winds
Riſe not, the waters of the deep ſhall riſe,
And needing none aſſiſtance of the ſtorm,
Shall roll themſelves aſhore, and reach him there.

The earth ſhall ſhake him out of all his holds,
Or make his houſe his grave. Nor ſo content,
Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood,
And drown him in her dry and duſty gulphs.
What then—were they the wicked above all,
And we the righteous, whoſe faſt-anchor'd iſle
Moved not, while theirs was rock'd like a light ſkiff,
The ſport of ev'ry wave? No: none are clear,
And none than we more guilty. But where all
Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the ſhafts
Of wrath obnoxious, God may chuſe his mark,
May puniſh, if he pleaſe, the leſs, to warn
The more malignant. If he ſpar'd not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine eſcape
Far guiltier England, leſt he ſpare not thee.

Happy the man who ſees a God employed
In all the good and ill that checquer life!
Reſolving all events with their effects
And manifold reſults, into the will

And arbitration wiſe of the Supreme.
Did not his eye rule all things, and intend
The leaſt of our concerns (ſince from the leaſt
The greateſt oft originate) could chance
Find place in his dominion, or diſpoſe
One lawleſs particle to thwart his plan,
Then God might be ſurprized, and unforeſeen
Contingence might alarm him, and diſturb
The ſmooth and equal courſe of his affairs.
This truth, philoſophy, though eagle-eyed
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks,
And having found his inſtrument, forgets
Or diſregards, or more preſumptuous ſtill
Denies the pow'r that wields it. God proclaims
His hot diſpleaſure againſt fooliſh men
That live an atheiſt life. Involves the heav'n
In tempeſts, quits his graſp upon the winds
And gives them all their fury. Bids a plague
Kindle a fiery boil upon the ſkin,
And putrefy the breath of blooming health.

He calls for famine, and the meagre fiend
Blows mildew from between his ſhrivel'd lips,
And taints the golden ear. He ſprings his mines,
And deſolates a nation at a blaſt.
Forth ſteps the ſpruce philoſopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and diſcordant ſprings
And principles; of cauſes how they work
By neceſſary laws their ſure effects,
Of action and re-action. He has found
The ſource of the diſeaſe that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart and baniſh fear.
Thou fool! will thy diſcov'ry of the cauſe
Suſpend th' effect or heal it? Has not God
Still wrought by means ſince firſt he made the world,
And did he not of old employ his means
To drown it? What is his creation leſs
Than a capacious reſervoir of means
Form'd for his uſe, and ready at his will?
Go, dreſs thine eyes with eye-ſalve, aſk of him

Or aſk of whomſoever he has taught,
And learn, though late, the genuine cauſe of all.

England, with all thy faults, I love thee ſtill
My country! and while yet a nook is left
Where Engliſh minds and manners may be found,
Shall be conſtrain'd to love thee. Though thy clime
Be fickle, and thy year, moſt part, deform'd
With dripping rains, or wither'd by a froſt,
I would not yet exchange thy ſullen ſkies
And fields without a flower, for warmer France
With all her vines; nor for Auſonia's groves
Of golden fruitage and her myrtle bow'rs.
To ſhake thy ſenate, and from heights ſublime
Of patriot eloquence to flaſh down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my taſk;
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and ſorrows with as true a heart
As any thund'rer there. And I can feel
Thy follies too, and with a juſt diſdain

Frown

Frown at effeminates, whoſe very looks
Reflect diſhonour on the land I love.
How, in the name of ſoldierſhip and ſenſe,
Should England proſper, when ſuch things, as ſmooth
And tender as a girl, all effenced o'er
With odors, and as profligate as ſweet,
Who ſell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
And love when they ſhould fight; when ſuch as theſe
Preſume to lay their hand upon the ark
Of her magnificent and awful cauſe?
Time was when it was praiſe and boaſt enough
In ev'ry clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children. Praiſe enough
To fill th' ambition of a private man,
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own.
Farewell thoſe honors, and farewell with them
The hope of ſuch hereafter. They have fall'n
Each in his field of glory: One in arms,
And one in council. Wolfe upon the lap

Of

Of ſmiling victory that moment won,
And Chatham, heart-ſick of his country's ſhame.
They made us many ſoldiers. Chatham ſtill
Conſulting England's happineſs at home,
Secured it by an unforgiving frown
If any wrong'd her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put ſo much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were ſwift to follow whom all loved.
Thoſe ſuns are ſet. Oh riſe ſome other ſuch!
Or all that we have left, is empty talk
Of old atchievements, and deſpair of new.

Now hoiſt the ſail, and let the ſtreamers float
Upon the wanton breezes. Strew the deck
With lavender, and ſprinkle liquid ſweets,
That no rude ſavour maritime invade
The noſe of nice nobility. Breathe ſoft
Ye clarionets, and ſofter ſtill ye flutes,
That winds and waters lull'd by magic ſounds

May bear us ſmoothly to the Gallic ſhore.
True, we have loſt an empire—let it paſs.
True, we may thank the perfidy of France
That pick'd the jewel out of England's crown,
With all the cunning of an envious ſhrew.
And let that paſs—'twas but a trick of ſtate.
A brave man knows no malice, but at once
Forgets in peace the injuries of war,
And gives his direſt foe a friend's embrace.
And ſhamed as we have been, to th' very beard
Braved and defied, and in our own ſea proved
Too weak for thoſe deciſive blows, that once
Inſured us maſt'ry there, we yet retain
Some ſmall pre-eminence, we juſtly boaſt
At leaſt ſuperior jockeyſhip, and claim
The honors of the turf as all our own.
Go then, well worthy of the praiſe ye ſeek,
And ſhow the ſhame ye might conceal at home,
In foreign eyes!—be grooms, and win the plate,
Where once your nobler fathers won a crown!—

'Tis

'Tis gen'rous to communicate your ſkill
To thoſe that need it. Folly is ſoon learn'd,
And under ſuch preceptors, who can fail?

There is a pleaſure in poetic pains
Which only poets know. The ſhifts and turns,
Th' expedients and inventions multiform
To which the mind reſorts, in chace of terms
Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win—
T' arreſt the fleeting images that fill
The mirror of the mind, and hold them faſt,
And force them ſit, 'till he has pencil'd off
A faithful likeneſs of the forms he views;
Then to diſpoſe his copies with ſuch art
That each may find its moſt propitious light,
And ſhine by ſituation, hardly leſs,
Than by the labor and the ſkill it coſt,
Are occupations of the poet's mind
So pleaſing, and that ſteal away the thought
With ſuch addreſs, from themes of ſad import,

That

That loſt in his own muſings, happy man!
He feels th' anxieties of life, denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.
Such joys has he that ſings. But ah! not ſuch,
Or ſeldom ſuch, the hearers of his ſong.
Faſtidious, or elſe liſtleſs, or perhaps
Aware of nothing arduous in a taſk
They never undertook, they little note
His dangers or eſcapes, and haply find
There leaſt amuſement where he found the moſt.
But is amuſement all? ſtudious of ſong,
And yet ambitious not to ſing in vain,
I would not trifle merely, though the world
Be loudeſt in their praiſe who do no more.
Yet what can ſatire, whether grave or gay?
It may correct a foible, may chaſtiſe
The freaks of faſhion, regulate the dreſs,
Retrench a ſword-blade, or diſplace a patch;
But where are its ſublimer trophies found?
What vice has it ſubdued? whoſe heart reclaim'd

By

By rigour, or whom laugh'd into reform?
Alas! Leviathan is not ſo tamed.
Laugh'd at, he laughs again; and ſtricken hard,
Turns to the ſtroke his adamantine ſcales,
That fear no diſcipline of human hands.

The pulpit therefore (and I name it, fill'd
With ſolemn awe, that bids me well beware
With what intent I touch that holy thing)
The pulpit (when the ſat'riſt has at laſt,
Strutting and vap'ring in an empty ſchool,
Spent all his force, and made no proſelyte)
I ſay the pulpit (in the ſober uſe
Of its legitimate peculiar pow'rs)
Muſt ſtand acknowledg'd, while the world ſhall ſtand,
The moſt important and effectual guard,
Support and ornament of virtue's cauſe.
There ſtands the meſſenger of truth. There ſtands
The legate of the ſkies. His theme divine,
His office ſacred, his credentials clear.

By

By him, the violated law ſpeaks out
Its thunders, and by him, in ſtrains as ſweet
As angels uſe, the goſpel whiſpers peace.
He ſtabliſhes the ſtrong, reſtores the weak,
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,
And arm'd himſelf in panoply complete
Of heav'nly temper, furniſhes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains by ev'ry rule
Of holy diſcipline, to glorious war,
The ſacramental hoſt of God's elect.
Are all ſuch teachers? would to heav'n all were!
But hark—the Doctor's voice—faſt wedg'd between
Two empirics he ſtands, and with ſwoln cheeks
Inſpires the news, his trumpet. Keener far
Than all invective is his bold harangue,
While through that public organ of report
He hails the clergy; and defying ſhame,
Announces to the world his own and theirs.
He teaches thoſe to read, whom ſchools diſmiſs'd,
And colleges, untaught; ſells accent, tone,

And emphaſis in ſcore, and gives to pray'r
Th' *adagio* and *andante* it demands.
He grinds divinity of other days
Down into modern uſe; transforms old print
To zig-zag manuſcript, and cheats the eyes
Of gall'ry critics by a thouſand arts.—
Are there who purchaſe of the Doctor's ware?
Oh name it not in Gath!—it cannot be,
That grave and learned Clerks ſhould need ſuch aid.
He doubtleſs is in ſport, and does but droll,
Aſſuming thus a rank unknown before,
Grand caterer and dry-nurſe of the church.

I venerate the man, whoſe heart is warm,
Whoſe hands are pure, whoſe doctrine and whoſe life
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honeſt in the ſacred cauſe.
To ſuch I render more than mere reſpect,
Whoſe actions ſay that they reſpect themſelves.
But looſe in morals, and in manners vain,

In

In converſation frivolous, in dreſs
Extreme, at once rapacious and profuſe,
Frequent in park, with lady at his ſide,
Ambling and prattling ſcandal as he goes,
But rare at home, and never at his books
Or with his pen, ſave when he ſcrawls a card;
Conſtant at routs, familiar with a round
Of ladyſhips, a ſtranger to the poor;
Ambitious of preferment for its gold,
And well prepared by ignorance and ſloth,
By infidelity and love o' th' world
To make God's work a ſinecure; a ſlave
To his own pleaſures and his patron's pride.—
From ſuch apoſtles, Oh ye mitred heads
Preſerve the church! and lay not careleſs hands
On ſculls that cannot teach, and will not learn.

Would I deſcribe a preacher, ſuch as Paul
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul ſhould himſelf direct me. I would trace

His maſter-ſtrokes, and draw from his deſign.
I would expreſs him ſimple, grave, ſincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain;
And plain in manner. Decent, ſolemn, chaſte,
And natural in geſture. Much impreſs'd
Himſelf, as conſcious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too. Affectionate in look,
And tender in addreſs, as well becomes
A meſſenger of grace to guilty men.
Behold the picture!—Is it like?—Like whom?
The things that mount the roſtrum with a ſkip
And then ſkip down again. Pronounce a text,
Cry, hem; and reading what they never wrote
Juſt fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whiſper cloſe the ſcene.

In man or woman, but far moſt in man,
And moſt of all in man that miniſters
And ſerves the altar, in my ſoul I loath

All

All affectation. 'Tis my perfect ſcorn;
Object of my implacable diſguſt.
What!—will a man play tricks, will he indulge
A ſilly fond conceit of his fair form
And juſt proportion, faſhionable mien
And pretty face in preſence of his God?
Or will he ſeek to dazzle me with tropes,
As with the di'mond on his lily hand,
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes
When I am hungry for the bread of life?
He mocks his Maker, proſtitutes and ſhames
His noble office, and inſtead of truth
Diſplaying his own beauty, ſtarves his flock.
Therefore avaunt! all attitude and ſtare
And ſtart theatric, practiſed at the glaſs.
I ſeek divine ſimplicity in him
Who handles things divine; and all beſide,
Though learn'd with labor, and though much admir'd
By curious eyes and judgments ill-inform'd,
To me is odious as the naſal twang

At conventicle heard, where worthy men
Miſled by cuſtom, ſtrain celeſtial themes
Through the preſt noſtril, ſpectacle-beſtrid.
Some, decent in demeanor while they preach,
That taſk perform'd, relapſe into themſelves,
And having ſpoken wiſely, at the cloſe
Grow wanton, and give proof to ev'ry eye—
Whoe'er was edified, themſelves were not.
Forth comes the pocket mirror. Firſt we ſtroke
An eye-brow; next, compoſe a ſtraggling lock;
Then with an air, moſt gracefully perform'd,
Fall back into our ſeat; extend an arm
And lay it at its eaſe with gentle care,
With handkerchief in hand, depending low.
The better hand more buſy, gives the noſe
Its bergamot, or aids th' indebted eye
With op'ra glaſs to watch the moving ſcene,
And recognize the ſlow-retiring fair.
Now this is fulſome; and offends me more
Than in a churchman ſlovenly neglect

And ruſtic coarſeneſs would. An heav'nly mind
May be indiff'rent to her houſe of clay,
And ſlight the hovel as beneath her care;
But how a body ſo fantaſtic, trim,
And quaint in its deportment and attire,
Can lodge an heavenly mind—demands a doubt.

He that negotiates between God and man,
As God's ambaſſador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, ſhould beware
Of lightneſs in his ſpeech. 'Tis pitiful
To court a grin, when you ſhould woo a ſoul;
To break a jeſt, when pity would inſpire
Pathetic exhortation; and t' addreſs
The ſkittiſh fancy with facetious tales,
When ſent with God's commiſſion to the heart.
So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip
Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
And I conſent you take it for your text,
Your only one, till ſides and benches fail.

No: he was ſerious in a ſerious cauſe,
And underſtood too well the weighty terms
That he had ta'en in charge. He would not ſtoop
To conquer thoſe by jocular exploits,
Whom truth and ſoberneſs aſſail'd in vain.

Oh, popular applauſe! what heart of man
Is proof againſt thy ſweet ſeducing charms?
The wiſeſt and the beſt feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentleſt gales;
But ſwell'd into a guſt—who then, alas!
With all his canvaſs ſet, and inexpert
And therefore heedleſs, can withſtand thy power?
Praiſe from the rivel'd lips of toothleſs, bald
Decrepitude; and in the looks of lean
And craving poverty; and in the bow
Reſpectful of the ſmutch'd artificer
Is oft too welcome, and may much diſturb
The bias of the purpoſe. How much more
Pour'd forth by beauty ſplendid and polite,

In language ſoft as adoration breathes?
Ah ſpare your idol! think him human ſtill,
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too,
Doat not too much, nor ſpoil what ye admire.

All truth is from the ſempiternal ſource
Of light divine. But Egypt, Greece, and Rome
Drew from the ſtream below. More favor'd we
Drink, when we chuſe it, at the fountain head.
To them it flow'd much mingled and defiled
With hurtful error, prejudice, and dreams
Illuſive of philoſophy, ſo call'd,
But falſely. Sages after ſages ſtrove
In vain, to filter off a chryſtal draught
Pure from the lees, which often more enhanced
The thirſt than ſlaked it, and not ſeldom bred
Intoxication and delirium wild.
In vain they puſh'd enquiry to the birth
And ſpring-time of the world, aſk'd, whence is man?
Why form'd at all? And wherefore as he is?

Where muſt he find his Maker? With what rites
Adore him? Will he hear, accept, and bleſs?
Or does he ſit regardleſs of his works?
Has man within him an immortal ſeed?
Or does the tomb take all? If he ſurvive
His aſhes, where? and in what weal or woe?
Knots worthy of ſolution, which alone
A Deity could ſolve. Their anſwers vague
And all at random, fabulous and dark,
Left them as dark themſelves. Their rules of life
Defective and unſanction'd, proved too weak
To bind the roving appetite, and lead
Blind nature to a God not yet reveal'd.
'Tis Revelation ſatisfies all doubts,
Explains all myſteries, except her own,
And ſo illuminates the path of life,
That fools diſcover it, and ſtray no more.
Now tell me, dignified and ſapient ſir,
My man of morals, nurtur'd in the ſhades

Of Academus, is this falſe or true?
Is Chriſt the abler teacher, or the ſchools?
If Chriſt, then why reſort at ev'ry turn
To Athens or to Rome, for wiſdom ſhort
Of man's occaſions, when in him reſide
Grace, knowledge, comfort, an unfathom'd ſtore?
How oft when Paul has ſerv'd us with a text,
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preach'd!
Men that if now alive, would ſit content
And humble learners of a Saviour's worth,
Preach it who might. Such was their love of truth,
Their thirſt of knowledge, and their candour too.

And thus it is, The paſtor, either vain
By nature, or by flattery made ſo, taught
To gaze at his own ſplendor, and t' exalt
Abſurdly, not his office, but himſelf;
Or unenlighten'd, and too proud to learn,
Or vicious, and not therefore apt to teach,
Perverting often by the ſtreſs of lewd

And looſe example, whom he ſhould inſtruct,
Expoſes and holds up to broad diſgrace
The nobleſt function, and diſcredits much
The brighteſt truths that man has ever ſeen.
For ghoſtly counſel, if it either fall
Below the exigence, or be not back'd
With ſhow of love, at leaſt with hopeful proof
Of ſome ſincerity on the giver's part;
Or be diſhonor'd in th' exterior form
And mode of its conveyance, by ſuch tricks
As move deriſion, or by foppiſh airs
And hiſtrionic mumm'ry, that let down
The pulpit to the level of the ſtage,
Drops from the lips a diſregarded thing.
The weak perhaps are moved, but are not taught,
While prejudice in men of ſtronger minds
Takes deeper root, confirm'd by what they ſee.
A relaxation of religion's hold
Upon the roving and untutor'd heart
Soon follows, and the curb of conſcience ſnapt,

The

The laity run wild.—But do they now?
Note their extravagance, and be convinced.

As nations ignorant of God, contrive
A wooden one, ſo we, no longer taught
By monitors that mother church ſupplies,
Now make our own. Poſterity will aſk
(If e'er poſterity ſee verſe of mine)
Some fifty or an hundred luſtrums hence,
What was a monitor in George's days?
My very gentle reader, yet unborn,
Of whom I needs muſt augur better things,
Since heav'n would ſure grow weary of a world
Productive only of a race like us,
A monitor is wood. Plank ſhaven thin.
We wear it at our backs. There cloſely braced
And neatly fitted, it compreſſes hard
The prominent and moſt unſightly bones,
And binds the ſhoulders flat. We prove its uſe
Sov'reign and moſt effectual to ſecure

A form not now gymnaſtic as of yore,
From rickets and diſtortion, elſe, our lot.
But thus admoniſh'd we can walk erect,
One proof at leaſt of manhood; while the friend
Sticks cloſe, a Mentor worthy of his charge.
Our habits coſtlier than Lucullus wore,
And by caprice as multiplied as his,
Juſt pleaſe us while the faſhion is at full,
But change with ev'ry moon. The ſycophant
That waits to dreſs us, arbitrates their date,
Surveys his fair reverſion with keen eye;
Finds one ill made, another obſolete,
This fits not nicely, that is ill conceived,
And making prize of all that he condemns,
With our expenditure defrays his own.
Variety's the very ſpice of life
That gives it all its flavor. We have run
Through ev'ry change that fancy at the loom
Exhauſted, has had genius to ſupply,
And ſtudious of mutation ſtill, diſcard

A real

A real elegance a little uſed
For monſtrous novelty and ſtrange diſguiſe.
We ſacrifice to dreſs, till houſhold joys
And comforts ceaſe. Dreſs drains our cellar dry,
And keeps our larder lean. Puts out our fires,
And introduces hunger, froſt, and woe,
Where peace and hoſpitality might reign.
What man that lives and that knows how to live,
Would fail t' exhibit at the public ſhows
A form as ſplendid as the proudeſt there,
Though appetite raiſe outcries at the coſt?
A man o' th' town dines late, but ſoon enough
With reaſonable forecaſt and diſpatch,
T' inſure a ſide-box ſtation at half price.
You think perhaps, ſo delicate his dreſs,
His daily fare as delicate. Alas!
He picks clean teeth, and buſy as he ſeems
With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet.
The rout is folly's circle which ſhe draws
With magic wand. So potent is the ſpell,

That

That none decoy'd into that fatal ring,
Unleſs by heaven's peculiar grace, eſcape.
There we grow early grey, but never wiſe.
There form connexions, and acquire no friend.
Solicit pleaſure hopeleſs of ſucceſs;
Waſte youth in occupations only fit
For ſecond childhood, and devote old age
To ſports which only childhood could excuſe.
There they are happieſt who diſſemble beſt
Their wearineſs; and they the moſt polite
Who ſquander time and treaſure with a ſmile
Though at their own deſtruction. She that aſks
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all,
And hates their coming. They, what can they leſs?
Make juſt repriſals, and with cringe and ſhrug
And bow obſequious, hide their hate of her.
All catch the frenzy, downward from her Grace
Whoſe flambeaux flaſh againſt the morning ſkies,
And gild our chamber cielings as they paſs,
To her who frugal only that her thrift

May feed exceſſes ſhe can ill afford,
Is hackney'd home unlacquey'd. Who in haſte
Alighting, turns the key in her own door,
And at the watchman's lantern borrowing light,
Finds a cold bed her only comfort left.
Wives beggar huſbands, huſbands ſtarve their wives,
On fortune's velvet altar off'ring up
Their laſt poor pittance. Fortune moſt ſevere
Of goddeſſes yet known, and coſtlier far
Than all that held their routs in heathen heav'n.—
So fare we in this priſon-houſe the world.
And 'tis a fearful ſpectacle to ſee
So many maniacs dancing in their chains.
They gaze upon the links that hold them faſt
With eyes of anguiſh, execrate their lot,
Then ſhake them in deſpair, and dance again.

Now baſket up the family of plagues
That waſte our vitals. Peculation, ſale
Of honor, perjury, corruption, frauds

By forgery, by ſubterfuge of law,
By tricks and lies as num'rous and as keen
As the neceſſities their authors feel;
Then caſt them cloſely bundled, ev'ry brat
At the right door. Profuſion is its ſire.
Profuſion unreſtrain'd, with all that's baſe
In character, has litter'd all the land,
And bred within the mem'ry of no few
A prieſthood ſuch as Baal's was of old,
A people ſuch as never was 'till now.
It is a hungry vice:—it eats up all
That gives ſociety its beauty, ſtrength,
Convenience, and ſecurity, and uſe.
Makes men mere vermin, worthy to be trapp'd
And gibbetted as faſt as catchpole claws
Can ſeize the ſlipp'ry prey. Unties the knot
Of union, and converts the ſacred band
That holds mankind together, to a ſcourge.
Profuſion deluging a ſtate with luſts
Of groſſeſt nature and of worſt effects,

Prepares

Prepares it for its ruin. Hardens, blinds,
And warps the conſciences of public men
Till they can laugh at virtue; mock the fools
That truſt them; and in th' end, diſcloſe a face
That would have ſhock'd credulity herſelf
Unmaſk'd, vouchſafing this their ſole excuſe,
Since all alike are ſelfiſh—why not they?
This does Profuſion, and th' accurſed cauſe
Of ſuch deep miſchief, has itſelf a cauſe.

In colleges and halls, in ancient days,
When learning, virtue, piety and truth
Were precious, and inculcated with care,
There dwelt a ſage call'd Diſcipline. His head
Not yet by time completely ſilver'd o'er,
Beſpoke him paſt the bounds of freakiſh youth,
But ſtrong for ſervice ſtill, and unimpair'd.
His eye was meek and gentle, and a ſmile
Play'd on his lips, and in his ſpeech was heard
Paternal ſweetneſs, dignity, and love.

The occupation deareſt to his heart
Was to encourage goodneſs. He would ſtroke
The head of modeſt and ingenuous worth
That bluſh'd at its own praiſe, and preſs the youth
Cloſe to his ſide that pleas'd him. Learning grew
Beneath his care, a thriving vig'rous plant;
The mind was well inform'd, the paſſions held
Subordinate, and diligence was choice,
If e'er it chanced, as ſometimes chance it muſt,
That one among ſo many overleap'd
The limits of controul, his gentle eye
Grew ſtern, and darted a ſevere rebuke;
His frown was full of terror, and his voice
Shook the delinquent with ſuch fits of awe
As left him not, till penitence had won
Loſt favor back again, and cloſed the breach.
But diſcipline, a faithful ſervant long,
Declined at length into the vale of years;
A palſy ſtruck his arm, his ſparkling eye
Was quench'd in rheums of age, his voice unſtrung

Grew tremulous, and moved deriſion more
Than rev'rence, in perverſe rebellious youth.
So colleges and halls neglected much
Their good old friend, and Diſcipline at length
O'erlook'd and unemploy'd, fell ſick and died.
Then ſtudy languiſh'd, emulation ſlept,
And virtue fled. The ſchools became a ſcene
Of ſolemn farce, where ignorance in ſtilts,
His cap well lined with logic not his own,
With parrot tongue perform'd the ſcholar's part,
Proceeding ſoon a graduated dunce.
Then compromiſe had place, and ſcrutiny
Became ſtone-blind, precedence went in truck,
And he was competent whoſe purſe was ſo.
A diſſolution of all bonds enſued,
The curbs invented for the muleiſh mouth
Of headſtrong youth were broken; bars and bolts
Grew ruſty by diſuſe, and maſſy gates
Forgot their office, op'ning with a touch;
'Till gowns at length are found mere maſquerade;

The taſſell'd cap and the ſpruce band a jeſt,
A mock'ry of the world. What need of theſe
For gameſters, jockies, brothellers impure,
Spendthrifts and booted ſportſmen, oft'ner ſeen
With belted waiſt and pointers at their heels,
Than in the bounds of duty? what was learn'd,
If aught was learn'd in childhood, is forgot,
And ſuch expence as pinches parents blue,
And mortifies the lib'ral hand of love,
Is ſquander'd in purſuit of idle ſports
And vicious pleaſures. Buys the boy a name,
That ſits a ſtigma on his father's houſe,
And cleaves through life inſeparably cloſe
To him that wears it. What can after-games
Of riper joys, and commerce with the world,
The lewd vain world that muſt receive him ſoon,
Add to ſuch erudition thus acquir'd
Where ſcience and where virtue are profeſs'd?
They may confirm his habits, rivet faſt
His folly, but to ſpoil him is a taſk

That

That bids defiance to th' united pow'rs
Of faſhion, diſſipation, taverns, ſtews.
Now, blame we moſt the nurſelings or the nurſe?
The children crook'd and twiſted and deform'd
Through want of care, or her whoſe winking eye
And ſlumb'ring oſcitancy marrs the brood?
The nurſe no doubt. Regardleſs of her charge
She needs herſelf correction. Needs to learn
That it is dang'rous ſporting with the world,
With things ſo ſacred as a nation's truſt,
The nurture of her youth, her deareſt pledge.

All are not ſuch. I had a brother once—
Peace to the mem'ry of a man of worth,
A man of letters, and of manners too—
Of manners ſweet as virtue always wears,
When gay good-nature dreſſes her in ſmiles.
He graced a college * in which order yet

* Ben'et Coll. Cambridge.

Was ſacred, and was honor'd, lov'd and wept
By more than one, themſelves conſpicuous there.
Some minds are temper'd happily, and mixt
With ſuch ingredients of good ſenſe and taſte
Of what is excellent in man, they thirſt
With ſuch a zeal to be what they approve,
That no reſtraints can circumſcribe them more,
Than they themſelves by choice, for wiſdom's ſake.
Nor can example hurt them. What they ſee
Of vice in others but enhancing more
The charms of virtue in their juſt eſteem.
If ſuch eſcape contagion, and emerge
Pure, from ſo foul a pool, to ſhine abroad,
And give the world their talents and themſelves,
Small thanks to thoſe whoſe negligence or ſloth
Expoſed their inexperience to the ſnare,
And left them to an undirected choice.

See then! the quiver broken and decay'd
In which are kept our arrows. Ruſting there

In

In wild diſorder and unfit for uſe,
What wonder if diſcharged into the world
They ſhame their ſhooters with a random flight,
Their points obtuſe, and feathers drunk with wine.
Well may the church wage unſucceſsful war
With ſuch artill'ry arm'd. Vice parries wide
Th' undreaded volley with a ſword of ſtraw,
And ſtands an impudent and fearleſs mark.

Have we not track'd the felon home, and found
His birth-place and his dam? the country mourns,
Mourns, becauſe ev'ry plague that can infeſt
Society, and that ſaps and worms the baſe
Of th' edifice that policy has raiſed,
Swarms in all quarters; meets the eye, the ear,
And ſuffocates the breath at ev'ry turn.
Profuſion breeds them. And the cauſe itſelf
Of that calamitous miſchief has been found.
Found too where moſt offenſive, in the ſkirts
Of the robed pædagogue. Elſe, let the arraign'd

Stand up unconſcious and refute the charge.
So when the Jewiſh Leader ſtretched his arm
And waved his rod divine, a race obſcene
Spawn'd in the muddy beds of Nile, came forth
Polluting Ægypt. Gardens, fields, and plains
Were cover'd with the peſt. The ſtreets were fill'd;
The croaking nuiſance lurk'd in ev'ry nook,
Nor palaces nor even chambers 'ſcaped,
And the land ſtank, ſo num'rous was the fry.

THE

TASK.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT of the THIRD BOOK.

Self-recollection and reproof.—Addreſs to domeſtic happineſs.—Some account of myſelf.—The vanity of many of their purſuits who are reputed wiſe.—Juſtification of my cenſures.—Divine illumination neceſſary to the moſt expert philoſopher.—The queſtion, What is truth? anſwered by other queſtions.—Domeſtic happineſs addreſſed again.—Few lovers of the country.—My tame hare.—Occupations of a retired gentleman in his garden.—Pruning.—Framing.—Greenhouſe.—Sowing of flower-ſeeds.—The country preferable to the town even in the winter.—Reaſons why it is deſerted at that ſeaſon.—Ruinous effects of gaming and of expenſive improvement.—Book concludes with an apoſtrophé to the metropolis.

THE TASK.

BOOK III.

THE GARDEN.

AS one who long in thickets and in brakes
Entangled, winds now this way and now that
His devious courſe uncertain, ſeeking home;
Or having long in miry ways been foiled
And ſore diſcomfited, from ſlough to ſlough
Plunging, and half deſpairing of eſcape,
If chance at length he find a green-ſwerd ſmooth
And faithful to the foot, his ſpirits riſe,
He chirrups briſk his ear-erecting ſteed,
And winds his way with pleaſure and with eaſe;
So I, deſigning other themes, and call'd

T' adorn

T' adorn the Sofa with eulogium due,
To tell its ſlumbers and to paint its dreams,
Have rambled wide. In country, city, ſeat
Of academic fame (howe'er deſerved)
Long held, and ſcarcely diſengaged at laſt.
But now with pleaſant pace, a cleanlier road
I mean to tread. I feel myſelf at large,
Courageous, and refreſh'd for future toil,
If toil await me, or if dangers new.

Since pulpits fail, and ſounding-boards reflect
Moſt part an empty ineffectual ſound,
What chance that I, to fame ſo little known,
Nor converſant with men or manners much,
Should ſpeak to purpoſe, or with better hope
Crack the ſatyric thong? 'twere wiſer far
For me enamour'd of ſequeſter'd ſcenes,
And charm'd with rural beauty, to repoſe
Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or vine,
My languid limbs when ſummer ſears the plains,

Or

Or when rough winter rages, on the ſoft
And ſhelter'd Sofa, while the nitrous air
Feeds a blue flame and makes a chearful hearth;
There undiſturb'd by folly, and appriz'd
How great the danger of diſturbing her,
To muſe in ſilence, or at leaſt confine
Remarks that gall ſo many, to the few
My partners in retreat. Diſguſt conceal'd
Is oft-times proof of wiſdom, when the fault
Is obſtinate, and cure beyond our reach.

Domeſtic happineſs, thou only bliſs
Of Paradiſe that has ſurvived the fall!
Though few now taſte thee unimpair'd and pure,
Or taſting, long enjoy thee, too infirm
Or too incautious to preſerve thy ſweets
Unmixt with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper ſheds into thy chryſtal cup.
Thou art the nurſe of virtue. In thine arms
She ſmiles, appearing, as in truth ſhe is,

Heav'n

Heav'n born and deſtined to the ſkies again.
Thou art not known where pleaſure is adored,
That reeling goddeſs with the zoneleſs waiſt
And wand'ring eyes, ſtill leaning on the arm
Of novelty, her fickle frail ſupport;
For thou art meek and conſtant, hating change,
And finding in the calm of truth-tied love
Joys that her ſtormy raptures never yield.
Forſaking thee, what ſhipwreck have we made
Of honor, dignity, and fair renown,
'Till proſtitution elbows us aſide
In all our crowded ſtreets, and ſenates ſeem
Convened for purpoſes of empire leſs,
Than to releaſe th' adultreſs from her bond.
Th' adultreſs! what a theme for angry verſe,
What provocation to th' indignant heart
That feels for injured love! but I diſdain
The nauſeous taſk to paint her as ſhe is,
Cruel, abandon'd, glorying in her ſhame.
No. Let her paſs, and chariotted along

In guilty ſplendor, ſhake the public ways;
The frequency of crimes has waſh'd them white.
And verſe of mine ſhall never brand the wretch,
Whom matrons now of character unſmirch'd
And chaſte themſelves, are not aſhamed to own.
Virtue and vice had bound'ries in old time
Not to be paſs'd. And ſhe that had renounced
Her ſex's honor, was renounced herſelf
By all that priz'd it; not for prud'ry's ſake,
But dignity's, reſentful of the wrong.
'Twas hard perhaps on here and there a waif
Deſirous to return and not received,
But was an whoſeſome rigor in the main,
And taught th' unblemiſh'd to preſerve with care
That purity, whoſe loſs was loſs of all.
Men too were nice in honor in thoſe days,
And judg'd offenders well. And he that ſharp'd,
And pocketted a prize by fraud obtain'd,
Was mark'd and ſhunn'd as odious. He that ſold
His country, or was ſlack when ſhe required

His

His ev'ry nerve in action and at ſtretch,
Paid with the blood that he had baſely ſpared
The price of his default. But now, yes, now,
We are become ſo candid and ſo fair,
So lib'ral in conſtruction, and ſo rich
In chriſtian charity, a good-natur'd age!
That they are ſafe, ſinners of either ſex, [bred,
Tranſgreſs what laws they may. Well dreſs'd, well
Well equipaged, is ticket good enough
To paſs us readily through ev'ry door,
Hypocriſy, deteſt her as we may,
(And no man's hatred ever wrong'd her yet)
May claim this merit ſtill, that ſhe admits
The worth of what ſhe mimics with ſuch care,
And thus gives virtue indirect applauſe;
But ſhe has burnt her maſk not needed here,
Where vice has ſuch allowance, that her ſhifts
And ſpecious ſemblances have loſt their uſe.

I was a ſtricken deer that left the herd
Long ſince; with many an arrow deep infixt

My

My panting ſide was charged when I withdrew
To ſeek a tranquil death in diſtant ſhades.
There was I found by one who had himſelf
Been hurt by th' archers. In his ſide he bore
And in his hands and feet the cruel ſcars.
With gentle force ſoliciting the darts
He drew them forth, and heal'd and bade me live.
Since then, with few aſſociates, in remote
And ſilent woods I wander, far from thoſe
My former partners of the peopled ſcene,
With few aſſociates, and not wiſhing more.
Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of a life to come.
I ſee that all are wand'rers, gone aſtray
Each in his own deluſions; they are loſt
In chace of fancied happineſs, ſtill wooed
And never won. Dream after dream enſues,
And ſtill they dream that they ſhall ſtill ſucceed,
And ſtill are diſappointed; rings the world

With the vain ſtir. I ſum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remainder half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay
As if created only like the fly
That ſpreads his motley wings in th' eye of noon
To ſport their ſeaſon and be ſeen no more.
The reſt are ſober dreamers, grave and wiſe,
And pregnant with diſcov'ries new and rare.
Some write a narrative of wars and feats
Of heroes little known, and call the rant
An hiſtory. Deſcribe the man, of whom
His own coævals took but little note,
And paint his perſon, character and views,
As they had known him from his mother's womb.
They diſentangle from the puzzled ſkein
In which obſcurity has wrapp'd them up,
The threads of politic and ſhrewd deſign
That ran through all his purpoſes, and charge
His mind with meanings that he never had,

Or having, kept conceal'd. Some drill and bore
The ſolid earth, and from the ſtrata there
Extract a regiſter, by which we learn
That he who made it and reveal'd its date
To Moſes, was miſtaken in its age.
Some more acute and more induſtrious ſtill
Contrive creation. Travel nature up
To the ſharp peak of her ſublimeſt height,
And tell us whence the ſtars. Why ſome are fixt,
And planetary ſome. What gave them firſt
Rotation, from what fountain flow'd their light.
Great conteſt follows, and much learned duſt
Involves the combatants, each claiming truth,
And truth diſclaiming both. And thus they ſpend
The little wick of life's poor ſhallow lamp,
In playing tricks with nature, giving laws
To diſtant worlds and trifling in their own.
Is't not a pity now that tickling rheums
Should ever teaze the lungs, and blear the ſight
Of oracles like theſe? Great pity too,

That having wielded th' elements, and built
A thouſand ſyſtems, each in his own way,
They ſhould go out in fume and be forgot?
Ah! what is life thus ſpent? and what are they
But frantic who thus ſpend it? all for ſmoke—
Eternity for bubbles, proves at laſt
A ſenſeleſs bargain. When I ſee ſuch games
Play'd by the creatures of a pow'r who ſwears
That he will judge the earth, and call the fool
To a ſharp reck'ning that has lived in vain,
And when I weigh this ſeeming wiſdom well
And prove it in th' infallible reſult
So hollow and ſo falſe—I feel my heart
Diſſolve in pity, and account the learn'd,
If this be learning, moſt of all deceived.
Great crimes alarm the conſcience, but ſhe ſleeps
While thoughtful man is plauſibly amuſed.
Defend me therefore common ſenſe, ſay I,
From reveries ſo airy, from the toil

Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up!

'Twere well, ſays one ſage erudite, profound,
Terribly arch'd and aquiline his noſe,
And overbuilt with moſt impending brows,
'Twere well could you permit the world to live
As the world pleaſes. What's the world to you?
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk
As ſweet as charity from human breaſts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep
And exerciſe all functions of a man.
How then ſhould I and any man that lives
Be ſtrangers to each other? pierce my vein,
Take of the crimſon ſtream meandring there
And catechiſe it well. Apply your glaſs,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own. And if it be,
What edge of ſubtlety canſt thou ſuppoſe
Keen enough, wiſe and ſkilful as thou art,

To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind.
True; I am no proficient, I confeſs,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the ſwift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themſelves in th' earth beneath,
I cannot analyſe the air, nor catch
The parallax of yonder luminous point
That ſeems half quench'd in the immenſe abyſs;
Such pow'rs I boaſt not—neither can I reſt
A ſilent witneſs of the headlong rage
Or heedleſs folly by which thouſands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred ſouls to mine.

God never meant that man ſhould ſcale the heav'ns
By ſtrides of human wiſdom. In his works
Though wond'rous, he commands us in his word
To ſeek him rather, where his mercy ſhines.
The mind indeed enlighten'd from above
Views him in all. Aſcribes to the grand cauſe

The grand effect. Acknowledges with joy
His manner, and with rapture taſtes his ſtile.
But never yet did philoſophic tube
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of obſervation, and diſcovers, elſe
Not viſible, his family of worlds,
Diſcover him that rules them; ſuch a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth
And dark in things divine. Full often too
Our wayward intellect, the more we learn
Of nature, overlooks her author more,
From inſtrumental cauſes proud to draw
Concluſions retrograde and mad miſtake.
But if his word once teach us, ſhoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiſcern'd but by that holy light,
Then all is plain. Philoſophy baptized
In the pure fountain of eternal love
Has eyes indeed; and viewing all ſhe ſees
As meant to indicate a God to man,

Gives *him* his praiſe, and forfeits not her own.
Learning has borne ſuch fruit in other days
On all her branches. Piety has found
Friends in the friends of ſcience, and true pray'r
Has flow'd from lips wet with Caſtalian dews.
Such was thy wiſdom, Newton, childlike ſage!
Sagacious reader of the works of God,
And in his word ſagacious. Such too thine
Milton, whoſe genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna. And ſuch thine in whom
Our Britiſh Themis gloried with juſt cauſe
Immortal Hale! for deep diſcernment praiſed
And ſound integrity not more, than famed
For ſanctity of manners undefiled.

All fleſh is graſs, and all its glory fades
Like the fair flow'r diſhevell'd in the wind;
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream;
The man we celebrate muſt find a tomb,
And we that worſhip him, ignoble graves.

Nothing

Nothing is proof againſt the gen'ral curſe
Of vanity, that ſeizes all below.
The only amaranthine flow'r on earth
Is virtue, th' only laſting treaſure, truth.
But what is truth? 'twas Pilate's queſtion put
To truth itſelf, that deign'd him no reply.
And wherefore? will not God impart his light
To them that aſk it?—Freely—'tis his joy,
His glory, and his nature to impart.
But to the proud, uncandid, inſincere
Or negligent enquirer, not a ſpark.
What's that which brings contempt upon a book
And him that writes it, though the ſtile be neat,
The method clear, and argument exact?
That makes a miniſter in holy things
The joy of many and the dread of more,
His name a theme for praiſe and for reproach?—
That while it gives us worth in God's account,
Depreciates and undoes us in our own?
What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,

That learning is too proud to gather up,
But which the poor and the deſpiſed of all
Seek and obtain, and often find unſought?
Tell me, and I will tell thee, what is truth.

Oh friendly to the beſt purſuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
Domeſtic life in rural leiſure paſs'd!
Few know thy value, and few taſte thy ſweets,
Though many boaſt thy favours, and affect
To underſtand and chuſe thee for their own.
But fooliſh man foregoes his proper bliſs
Ev'n as his firſt progenitor, and quits,
Though placed in paradiſe (for earth has ſtill
Some traces of her youthful beauty left)
Subſtantial happineſs for tranſient joy.
Scenes form'd for contemplation, and to nurſe
The growing ſeeds of wiſdom; that ſuggeſt
By ev'ry pleaſing image they preſent
Reflections ſuch as meliorate the heart,

Compoſe

Compoſe the paſſions, and exalt the mind,
Scenes ſuch as theſe, 'tis his ſupreme delight
To fill with riot and defile with blood.
Should ſome contagion kind to the poor brutes
We perſecute, annihilate the tribes
That draw the ſportſman over hill and dale
Fearleſs, and rapt away from all his cares;
Should never game-fowl hatch her eggs again,
Nor baited hook deceive the fiſhes eye;
Could pageantry and dance and feaſt and ſong
Be quell'd in all our ſummer-month retreats;
How many ſelf-deluded nymphs and ſwains
Who dream they have a taſte for fields and groves,
Would find them hideous nurs'ries of the ſpleen,
And crowd the roads, impatient for the town!
They love the country, and none elſe, who ſeek
For their own ſake its ſilence and its ſhade.
Delights which who would leave, that has a heart
Suſceptible of pity, or a mind
Cultured and capable of ſober thought,

For all the ſavage din of the ſwift pack
And clamours of the field? deteſted ſport,
That owes its pleaſures to another's pain,
That feeds upon the ſobs and dying ſhrieks
Of harmleſs nature, dumb, but yet endued
With eloquence that agonies inſpire
Of ſilent tears and heart-diſtending ſighs!
Vain tears alas! and ſighs that never find
A correſponding tone in jovial ſouls.
Well—one at leaſt is ſafe. One ſhelter'd hare
Has never heard the ſanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years experience of my care
Has made at laſt familiar, ſhe has loſt
Much of her vigilant inſtinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes—thou may'ſt eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee; thou may'ſt frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire ſecure

To thy ſtraw-couch, and ſlumber unalarm'd.
For I have gain'd thy confidence, have pledg'd
All that is human in me, to protect
Thine unſuſpecting gratitude and love.
If I ſurvive thee I will dig thy grave,
And when I place thee in it, ſighing ſay,
I knew at leaſt one hare that had a friend.

How various his employments, whom the world
Calls idle, and who juſtly in return
Eſteems that buſy world an idler too!
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful induſtry enjoyed at home,
And nature in her cultivated trim
Dreſſed to his taſte, inviting him abroad—
Can he want occupation who has theſe?
Will he be idle who has much t' enjoy?
Me therefore, ſtudious of laborious eaſe,
Not ſlothful; happy to deceive the time
Not waſte it; and aware that human life

Is but a loan to be repaid with uſe,
When he ſhall call his debtors to account,
From whom are all our bleſſings, bus'neſs finds
Ev'n here. While ſedulous I ſeek t' improve
At leaſt neglect not, or leave unemploy'd
The mind he gave me; driving it, though ſlack
Too oft, and much impeded in its work
By cauſes not to be divulged in vain,
To its juſt point the ſervice of mankind.
He that attends to his interior ſelf,
That has a heart and keeps it: has a mind
That hungers and ſupplies it; and who ſeeks
A ſocial, not a diſſipated life,
Has buſineſs. Feels himſelf engaged t' atchieve
No unimportant, though a ſilent taſk.
A life all turbulence and noiſe, may ſeem
To him that leads it, wiſe and to be prais'd;
But wiſdom is a pearl with moſt ſucceſs
Sought in ſtill water, and beneath clear ſkies.
He that is ever occupied in ſtorms,

Or dives not for it, or brings up inſtead,
Vainly induſtrious, a diſgraceful prize.

The morning finds the ſelf-ſequeſter'd man
Freſh for his taſk, intend what taſk he may.
Whether inclement ſeaſons recommend
His warm but ſimple home, where he enjoys
With her who ſhares his pleaſures and his heart,
Sweet converſe, ſipping calm the fragrant lymph
Which neatly ſhe prepares; then to his book
Well choſen, and not ſullenly peruſed
In ſelfiſh ſilence, but imparted oft
As aught occurs that ſhe may ſmile to hear,
Or turn to nouriſhment digeſted well.
Or if the garden with its many cares,
All well repay'd, demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conſcious how much the hand
Of lubbard labor needs his watchful eye,
Oft loit'ring lazily if not o'erſeen,
Or miſapplying his unſkilful ſtrength.

Nor

Nor does he govern only or direct,
But much performs himſelf. No works indeed
That aſk robuſt tough ſinews bred to toil,
Servile employ—but ſuch as may amuſe,
Not tire, demanding rather ſkill than force.
Proud of his well-ſpread walls, he views his trees
That meet (no barren interval between)
With pleaſure more than ev'n their fruits afford,
Which, ſave himſelf who trains them, none can feel.
Theſe therefore are his own peculiar charge,
No meaner hand may diſcipline the ſhoots,
None but his ſteel approach them. What is weak,
Diſtemper'd, or has loſt prolific pow'rs
Impair'd by age, his unrelenting hand
Dooms to the knife. Nor does he ſpare the ſoft
And ſucculent that feeds its giant growth
But barren, at th' expence of neighb'ring twigs
Leſs oſtentatious, and yet ſtudded thick
With hopeful gems. The reſt, no portion left
That may diſgrace his art, or diſappoint

Large expectation, he diſpoſes neat
At meaſur'd diſtances, that air and ſun
Admitted freely may afford their aid,
And ventilate and warm the ſwelling buds.
Hence ſummer has her riches, autumn hence,
And hence ev'n winter fills his wither'd hand
With bluſhing fruits, and plenty not his own. *
Fair recompenſe of labour well beſtow'd
And wiſe precaution, which a clime ſo rude
Makes needful ſtill, whoſe ſpring is but the child
Of churliſh winter, in her froward moods
Diſcov'ring much the temper of her ſire.
For oft, as if in her the ſtream of mild
Maternal nature had revers'd its courſe,
She brings her infants forth with many ſmiles,
But once deliver'd, kills them with a frown.
He therefore, timely warn'd, himſelf ſupplies
Her want of care, ſcreening and keeping warm
The plenteous bloom, that no rough blaſt may ſweep

* Miraturque novos fructus et non ſua poma. VIRG.

His garlands from the boughs. Again, as oft
As the ſun peeps and vernal airs breathe mild,
The fence withdrawn, he gives them ev'ry beam,
And ſpreads his hopes before the blaze of day.

To raiſe the prickly and green-coated gourd
So grateful to the palate, and when rare
So coveted, elſe baſe and diſeſteem'd—
Food for the vulgar merely—is an art
That toiling ages have but juſt matured,
And at this moment uneſſay'd in ſong.
Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice long ſince
Their eulogy; thoſe ſang the Mantuan bard,
And theſe the Grecian in ennobling ſtrains,
And in thy numbers, Phillips, ſhines for ay
The ſolitary ſhilling. Pardon then,
Ye ſage diſpenſers of poetic fame!
Th' ambition of one meaner far, whoſe pow'rs
Preſuming an attempt not leſs ſublime,
Pant for the praiſe of dreſſing to the taſte

Of critic appetite, no ſordid fare,
A cucumber, while coſtly yet and ſcarce.

The ſtable yields a ſtercorarious heap
Impregnated with quick fermenting ſalts,
And potent to reſiſt the freezing blaſt.
For ere the beech and elm have caſt their leaf
Deciduous, and when now November dark
Checks vegetation in the torpid plant
Expoſed to his cold breath, the taſk begins.
Warily therefore, and with prudent heed
He ſeeks a favor'd ſpot, that where he builds
Th' agglomerated pile, his frame may front
The ſun's meridian diſk, and at the back
Enjoy cloſe ſhelter, wall, or reeds, or hedge
Impervious to the wind. Firſt he bids ſpread
Dry fern or litter'd hay, that may imbibe
Th' aſcending damps; then leiſurely impoſe
And lightly, ſhaking it with agile hand
From the full fork, the ſaturated ſtraw.

What longeſt binds the cloſeſt, forms ſecure
The ſhapely ſide, that as it riſes takes
By juſt degrees an overhanging breadth,
Shelt'ring the baſe with its projected eaves.
Th' uplifted frame compact at ev'ry joint,
And overlaid with clear tranſlucent glaſs
He ſettles next upon the ſloping mount,
Whoſe ſharp declivity ſhoots off ſecure
From the daſh'd pane the deluge as it falls.
He ſhuts it cloſe, and the firſt labor ends.
Thrice muſt the voluble and reſtleſs earth
Spin round upon her axle, ere the warmth
Slow gathering in the midſt, through the ſquare maſs
Diffus'd, attain the ſurface. When behold!
A peſtilent and moſt corroſive ſteam,
Like a groſs fog Bœotian, riſing faſt,
And faſt condenſed upon the dewy ſaſh,
Aſks egreſs; which obtained, the overcharged
And drench'd conſervatory breathes abroad
In volumes wheeling ſlow, the vapor dank,

And

And purified, rejoices to have loſt
Its foul inhabitant. But to aſſuage
Th' impatient fervor which it firſt conceives
Within its reeking boſom, threat'ning death
To his young hopes, requires diſcreet delay.
Experience, ſlow preceptreſs, teaching oft
The way to glory by miſcarriage foul,
Muſt prompt him, and admoniſh how to catch
Th' auſpicious moment, when the temper'd heat
Friendly to vital motion, may afford
Soft fermentation, and invite the ſeed.
The ſeed ſelected wiſely, plump and ſmooth
And gloſſy, he commits to pots of ſize
Diminutive, well fill'd with well-prepar'd
And fruitful ſoil, that has been treaſur'd long,
And drunk no moiſture from the dripping clouds.
Theſe on the warm and genial earth that hides
The ſmoking manure and o'erſpreads it all,
He places lightly, and as time ſubdues
The rage of fermentation, plunges deep

In the ſoft medium, till they ſtand immers'd.
Then riſe the tender germs upſtarting quick
And ſpreading wide their ſpongy lobes, at firſt
Pale, wan, and livid, but aſſuming ſoon,
If fann'd by balmy and nutritious air
Strain'd through the friendly mats, a vivid green.
Two leaves produced, two rough indented leaves,
Cautious, he pinches from the ſecond ſtalk
A pimple, that portends a future ſprout,
And interdicts its growth. Thence ſtraight ſucceed
The branches, ſturdy to his utmoſt wiſh,
Prolifie all, and harbingers of more.
The crowded roots demand enlargement now
And tranſplantation in an ampler ſpace.
Indulged in what they wiſh, they ſoon ſupply
Large foliage, overſhadowing golden flowers,
Blown on the ſummit of th' apparent fruit.
Theſe have their ſexes, and when ſummer ſhines
The bee tranſports the fertilizing meal
From flow'r to flow'r, and ev'n the breathing air

Wafts the rich prize to its appointed uſe.
Not ſo when winter ſcowls. Aſſiſtant art
Then acts in nature's office, brings to paſs
The glad eſpouſals and inſures the crop.

Grudge not, ye rich (ſince luxury muſt have
His dainties, and the world's more num'rous half
Lives by contriving delicates for you)
Grudge not the coſt. Ye little know the cares,
The vigilance, the labor and the ſkill
That day and night are exerciſed, and hang
Upon the tickliſh balance of ſuſpenſe,
That ye may garniſh your profuſe regales
With ſummer fruits brought forth by wintry ſuns.
Ten thouſand dangers lie in wait to thwart
The proceſs. Heat and cold, and wind and ſteam,
Moiſture and drought, mice, worms, and ſwarming flies
Minute as duſt and numberleſs, oft work
Dire diſappointment that admits no cure,
And which no care can obviate. It were long,

Too long to tell th' expedients and the ſhifts
Which he that fights a ſeaſon ſo ſevere
Deviſes, while he guards his tender truſt,
And oft, at laſt, in vain. The learn'd and wiſe
Sarcaſtic would exclaim, and judge the ſong
Cold as its theme, and like its theme, the fruit
Of too much labor, worthleſs when produced.

Who loves a garden, loves a green-houſe too.
Unconſcious of a leſs propitious clime
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and ſnug,
While the winds whiſtle and the ſnows deſcend.
The ſpiry myrtle with unwith'ring leaf
Shines there and flouriſhes. The golden boaſt
Of Portugal and weſtern India there,
The ruddier orange and the paler lime
Peep through their poliſh'd foliage at the ſtorm,
And ſeem to ſmile at what they need not fear.
Th' amomum there with intermingling flow'rs
And cherries hangs her twigs. Geranium boaſts

Her

Her crimſon honors, and the ſpangled beau
Ficoides, glitters bright the winter long.
All plants of ev'ry leaf that can endure
The winter's frown, if ſcreen'd from his ſhrewd bite,
Live there and proſper. Thoſe Auſonia claims,
Levantine regions theſe; th' Azores ſend
Their jeſſamine, her jeſſamine remote
Caffraia; foreigners from many lands
They form one ſocial ſhade, as if convened
By magic ſummons of th' Orphean lyre.
Yet juſt arrangement, rarely brought to paſs
But by a maſter's hand, diſpoſing well
The gay diverſities of leaf and flow'r,
Muſt lend its aid t' illuſtrate all their charms,
And dreſs the regular yet various ſcene.
Plant behind plant aſpiring, in the van
The dwarfiſh, in the rear retired, but ſtill
Sublime above the reſt, the ſtatelier ſtand.
So once were ranged the ſons of ancient Rome,
A noble ſhow! while Roſcius trod the ſtage;
And ſo, while Garrick as renown'd as he,

The ſons of Albion; fearing each to loſe
Some note of Nature's muſic from his lips,
And covetous of Shakeſpeare's beauty ſeen
In ev'ry flaſh of his far-beaming eye.
Nor taſte alone and well-contriv'd diſplay
Suffice to give the marſhall'd ranks the grace
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains
Unſung, and many cares are yet behind
And more laborious. Cares on which depends
Their vigor, injured ſoon, not ſoon reſtored.
The ſoil muſt be renew'd, which often waſh'd
Loſes its treaſure of ſalubrious ſalts,
And diſappoints the roots; the ſlender roots
Cloſe interwoven where they meet the vaſe
Muſt ſmooth be ſhorn away; the ſapleſs branch
Muſt fly before the knife; the wither'd leaf
Muſt be detach'd, and where it ſtrews the floor
Swept with a woman's neatneſs, breeding elſe
Contagion, and diſſeminating death.
Diſcharge but theſe kind offices (and who

Would

Would ſpare, that loves them, offices like theſe?)
Well they reward the toil. The ſight is pleaſed,
The ſcent regaled, each odorif'rous leaf,
Each opening bloſſom freely breathes abroad
Its gratitude, and thanks him with its ſweets.

So manifold, all pleaſing in their kind,
All healthful, are th' employs of rural life,
Reiterated as the wheel of time
Runs round, ſtill ending, and beginning ſtill.
Nor are theſe all. To deck the ſhapely knoll
That ſoftly ſwell'd and gayly dreſs'd, appears
A flow'ry iſland from the dark green lawn
Emerging, muſt be deemed a labor due
To no mean hand, and aſks the touch of taſte.
Here alſo grateful mixture of well match'd
And ſorted hues (each giving each relief,
And by contraſted beauty ſhining more)
Is needful. Strength may wield the pond'rous ſpade,
May turn the clod, and wheel the compoſt home,

But

But elegance, chief grace the garden ſhows
And moſt attractive, is the fair reſult
Of thought, the creature of a poliſh'd mind.
Without it, all is Gothic as the ſcene
To which th' inſipid citizen reſorts
Near yonder heath; where induſtry miſpent,
But proud of his uncouth ill-choſen taſk,
Has made a heaven on earth. With ſuns and moons
Of cloſe-ramm'd ſtones has charg'd th' incumber'd ſoil,
And fairly laid the zodiac in the duſt.
He therefore who would ſee his flow'rs diſpoſed
Sightly and in juſt order, ere he gives
The beds the truſted treaſure of their ſeeds
Forecaſts the future whole; that when the ſcene
Shall break into its preconceived diſplay,
Each for itſelf, and all as with one voice
Conſpiring, may atteſt his bright deſign.
Nor even then, diſmiſſing as perform'd
His pleaſant work, may he ſuppoſe it done.
Few ſelf-ſupported flow'rs endure the wind

Uninjured,

Uninjured, but expect th' upholding aid
Of the ſmooth-ſhaven prop, and neatly tied
Are wedded thus like beauty to old age,
For int'reſt ſake, the living to the dead.
Some cloath the ſoil that feeds them, far diffuſed
And lowly creeping, modeſt and yet fair,
Like virtue, thriving moſt where little ſeen.
Some more aſpiring catch the neighbour ſhrub
With claſping tendrils, and inveſt his branch
Elſe unadorn'd, with many a gay feſtoon
And fragrant chaplet, recompenſing well
The ſtrength they borrow with the grace they lend.
All hate the rank ſociety of weeds
Noiſome, and ever greedy to exhauſt
Th' impoveriſh'd earth; an overbearing race,
That like the multitude made faction-mad
Diſturb good order, and degrade true worth.

Oh bleſt ſecluſion from a jarring world
Which he thus occupied, enjoys! Retreat

Cannot

Cannot indeed to guilty man reſtore
Loſt innocence, or cancel follies paſt,
But it has peace, and much ſecures the mind
From all aſſaults of evil, proving ſtill
A faithful barrier, not o'erleap'd with eaſe
By vicious cuſtom, raging uncontroul'd
Abroad, and deſolating public life.
When fierce temptation ſeconded within
By traitor appetite, and arm'd with darts
Temper'd in hell, invades the throbbing breaſt,
To combat may be glorious, and ſucceſs
Perhaps may crown us, but to fly is ſafe.
Had I the choice of ſublunary good,
What could I wiſh, that I poſſeſs not here?
Health, leiſure, means t' improve it, friendſhip, peace
No looſe or wanton, though a wand'ring muſe,
And conſtant occupation without care.
Thus bleſt, I draw a picture of that bliſs;
Hopeleſs indeed that diſſipated minds,
And profligate abuſers of a world

Created

Created fair ſo much in vain for them,
Should ſeek the guiltleſs joys that I deſcribe
Allured by my report. But ſure no leſs
That ſelf-condemn'd they muſt neglect the prize,
And what they will not taſte, muſt yet approve.
What we admire we praiſe. And when we praiſe
Advance it into notice, that its worth
Acknowledg'd, others may admire it too.
I therefore recommend, though at the riſk
Of popular diſguſt, yet boldly ſtill,
The cauſe of piety and ſacred truth
And virtue, and thoſe ſcenes which God ordain'd
Should beſt ſecure them and promote them moſt;
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forſaken, or through folly not enjoyed.
Pure is the nymph, though lib'ral of her ſmiles,
And chaſte, though unconfined, whom I extol.
Not as the prince in Suſhan, when he call'd
Vain-glorious of her charms his Vaſhti forth
To grace the full pavilion. His deſign

Was but to boaſt his own peculiar good,
Which all might view with envy, none partake.
My charmer is not mine alone; my ſweets
And ſhe that ſweetens all my bitters too,
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whoſe form
And lineaments divine I trace a hand
That errs not, and find raptures ſtill renew'd,
Is free to all men, univerſal prize.
Strange that ſo fair a creature ſhould yet want
Admirers, and be deſtin'd to divide
With meaner objects, ev'n the few ſhe finds.
Stript of her ornaments, her leaves and flow'rs,
She loſes all her influence. Cities then
Attract us, and neglected Nature pines
Abandon'd, as unworthy of our love.
But are not wholeſome airs, though unperfumed
By roſes, and clear ſuns though ſcarcely felt,
And groves if unharmonious, yet ſecure
From clamour, and whoſe very ſilence charms,
To be preferr'd to ſmoke, to the eclipſe

That

That Metropolitan volcano's make,
Whoſe Stygian throats breathe darkneſs all day long;
And to the ſtir of commerce, driving ſlow,
And thund'ring loud, with his ten thouſand wheels?
They would be, were not madneſs in the head
And folly in the heart; were England now
What England was, plain, hoſpitable, kind,
And undebauch'd. But we have bid farewell
To all the virtues of thoſe better days,
And all their honeſt pleaſures. Manſions once
Knew their own maſters, and laborious hinds
That had ſurviv'd the father, ſerv'd the ſon.
Now the legitimate and rightful Lord
Is but a tranſient gueſt, newly arrived
And ſoon to be ſupplanted. He that ſaw
His patrimonial timber caſt its leaf,
Sells the laſt ſcantling, and transfers the price
To ſome ſhrewd ſharper, ere it buds again.
Eſtates are landſcapes, gazed upon awhile,
Then advertiſed, and auctioneer'd away.

The country ſtarves, and they that feed th' o'ercharged
And ſurfeited lewd town with her fair dues,
By a juſt judgment ſtrip and ſtarve themſelves.
The wings that waft our riches out of ſight
Grow on the gameſter's elbows, and th' alert
And nimble motion of thoſe reſtleſs joints
That never tire, ſoon fans them all away.
Improvement too, the idol of the age,
Is fed with many a victim. Lo! he comes—
The omnipotent magician, Brown appears.
Down falls the venerable pile, th' abode
Of our forefathers, a grave whiſker'd race,
But taſteleſs. Springs a palace in its ſtead,
But in a diſtant ſpot; where more expoſed
It may enjoy th' advantage of the North
And agueiſh Eaſt, till time ſhall have transformed
Thoſe naked acres to a ſhelt'ring grove.
He ſpeaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn,
Woods vaniſh, hills ſubſide, and vallies riſe,
And ſtreams, as if created for his uſe,

Purſue the track of his directing wand
Sinuous or ſtrait, now rapid and now ſlow,
Now murm'ring ſoft, now roaring in caſcades,
Ev'n as he bids. Th' enraptur'd owner ſmiles.
'Tis finiſh'd. And yet finiſh'd as it ſeems,
Still wants a grace, th' loveliеſt it could ſhow,
A mine to ſatisfy the enormous coſt.
Drain'd to the laſt poor item of his wealth,
He ſighs, departs, and leaves the accompliſhed plan
That he has touch'd, retouch'd, many a long day
Labor'd, and many a night purſued in dreams,
Juſt when it meets his hopes, and proves the heav'n
He wanted, for a wealthier to enjoy.
And now perhaps the glorious hour is come,
When having no ſtake left, no pledge t' indear
Her int'reſts, or that gives her ſacred cauſe
A moment's operation on his love,
He burns with moſt intenſe and flagrant zeal
To ſerve his country. Miniſterial grace
Deals him out money from the public cheſt,

Or if that mine be ſhut, ſome private purſe
Supplies his need with an uſurious loan,
To be refunded duly, when his vote,
Well-managed, ſhall have earn'd its worthy price.
Oh innocent, compared with arts like theſe,
Crape and cock'd piſtol and the whiſtling ball
Sent through the trav'llers temples! he that finds
One drop of heav'n's ſweet mercy in his cup,
Can dig, beg, rot, and periſh well-content,
So he may wrap himſelf in honeſt rags
At his laſt gaſp; but could not for a world
Fiſh up his dirty and dependent bread
From pools and ditches of the commonwealth,
Sordid and ſick'ning at his own ſucceſs.

Ambition, av'rice, penury incurr'd
By endleſs riot; vanity, the luſt
Of pleaſure and variety, diſpatch,
As duly as the ſwallows diſappear,
The world of wand'ring knights and ſquires to town.

London

London ingulphs them all. The ſhark is there
And the ſhark's prey. The ſpendthrift and the leech
That ſucks him. There the ſycophant and he
That with bare-headed and obſequious bows
Begs a warm office, doom'd to a cold jail
And groat per diem if his patron frown.
The levee ſwarms, as if in golden pomp
Were character'd on ev'ry ſtateman's door,
"BATTER'D AND BANKRUPT FORTUNES MENDED HERE."
Theſe are the charms that ſully and eclipſe
The charms of nature. 'Tis the cruel gripe
That lean hard-handed poverty inflicts,
The hope of better things, the chance to win,
The wiſh to ſhine, the thirſt to be amuſed,
That at the ſound of Winter's hoary wing,
Unpeople all our counties, of ſuch herds
Of flutt'ring, loit'ring, cringing, begging, looſe
And wanton vagrants, as make London, vaſt
And boundleſs as it is, a crowded coop.

Oh thou reſort and mart of all the earth,
Chequer'd with all complexions of mankind,
And ſpotted with all crimes; in whom I ſee
Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor; thou freckled fair
That pleaſes and yet ſhocks me, I can laugh
And I can weep, can hope, and can deſpond,
Feel wrath and pity when I think on thee!
Ten righteous would have ſaved a city once,
And thou haſt many righteous.—Well for thee—
That ſalt preſerves thee; more corrupted elſe,
And therefore more obnoxious at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had pow'r to be,
For whom God heard his Abr'am plead in vain.

THE TASK.

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT of the FOURTH BOOK.

The poſt comes in.—The news-paper is read.—The world contemplated at a diſtance.—Addreſs to Winter.—The amuſements of a rural winter evening compared with the faſhionable ones.—Addreſs to Evening.—A brown ſtudy.—Fall of ſnow in the evening. The waggoner.—A poor family-piece.—The rural thief.—Public houſes.—The multitude of them cenſured.—The farmer's daughter, what ſhe was.—What ſhe is.—The ſimplicity of country manners almoſt loſt.—Cauſes of the change.—Deſertion of the country by the rich.—Neglect of magiſtrates.—The militia principally in fault.—The new recruit, and his transformation.—Reflection on bodies corporate.—The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguiſhed.

THE TASK.

BOOK IV.

THE WINTER EVENING.

HARK! 'tis the twanging horn! o'er yonder bridge
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright;
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumb'ring at his back.
True to his charge the close-pack'd load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destin'd inn,

And

And having dropp'd th' expected bag—paſs on.
He whiſtles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet chearful: meſſenger of grief
Perhaps to thouſands, and of joy to ſome,
To him indiff'rent whether grief or joy.
Houſes in aſhes, and the fall of ſtocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epiſtles wet
With tears that trickled down the writers cheeks
Faſt as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charged with am'rous ſighs of abſent ſwains
Or nymphs reſponſive, equally affect
His horſe and him, unconſcious of them all.
But oh th' important budget! uſher'd in
With ſuch heart-ſhaking muſic, who can ſay
What are its tidings? have our troops awaked?
Or do they ſtill, as if with opium drugg'd,
Snore to the murmurs of th' Atlantic wave?
Is India free? and does ſhe wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a ſmile of peace,
Or do we grind her ſtill? the grand debate,

The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic and the wiſdom and the wit
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;
I burn to ſet th' impriſon'd wranglers free,
And give them voice and utt'rance once again.

Now ſtir the fire, and cloſe the ſhutters faſt,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the ſofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hiſſing urn
Throws up a ſteamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not ſuch his evening, who with ſhining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and ſqueezed
And bored with elbow-points through both his ſides,
Out-ſcolds the ranting actor on the ſtage.
Nor his, who patient ſtands 'till his feet throb
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots burſting with heroic rage,
Or placemen, all tranquillity and ſmiles.

This folio of four pages, happy work!
Which not ev'n critics criticiſe, that holds
Inquiſitive attention while I read
Faſt bound in chains of ſilence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themſelves, yet fear to break,
What is it but a map of buſy life,
Its fluctuations and its vaſt concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the ſummit, ſee,
The ſeals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he graſps them. At his heels,
Cloſe at his heels a demagogue aſcends,
And with a dext'rous jerk ſoon twiſts him down
And wins them, but to loſe them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence in ſoft
Mæanders lubricate the courſe they take;
The modeſt ſpeaker is aſhamed and grieved
T' engroſs a moment's notice, and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.

Sweet

Sweet baſhfulneſs! it claims, at leaſt, this praiſe,
The dearth of information and good ſenſe
That it foretells us, always comes to paſs.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here,
There foreſts of no meaning ſpread the page
In which all comprehenſion wanders loſt;
While fields of pleaſantry amuſe us there,
With merry deſcants on a nation's woes.
The reſt appears a wilderneſs of ſtrange
But gay confuſion, roſes for the cheeks
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothleſs, ringlets for the bald,
Heav'n, earth, and ocean plunder'd of their ſweets,
Nectareous eſſences, Olympian dews,
Sermons and city feaſts and fav'rite airs,
Æthereal journies, ſubmarine exploits,
And Katterfelto with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wond'ring for his bread.
'Tis pleaſant through the loop-holes of retreat
To peep at ſuch a world. To ſee the ſtir

Of the great Babel and not feel the crowd.
To hear the roar ſhe ſends through all her gates
At a ſafe diſtance, where the dying ſound
Falls a ſoft murmur on th' uninjur'd ear.
Thus ſitting and ſurveying thus at eaſe
The globe and its concerns, I ſeem advanced
To ſome ſecure and more than mortal height,
That lib'rates and exempts me from them all.
It turns ſubmitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations; I behold
The tumult and am ſtill. The ſound of war
Has loſt its terrors ere it reaches me.
Grieves but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And av'arice that makes man a wolf to man,
Hear the faint echo of thoſe brazen throats
By which he ſpeaks the language of his heart,
And ſigh, but never tremble at the ſound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flow'r to flow'r, ſo he from land to land;
The manners, cuſtoms, policy of all

Pay contribution to the ſtore he gleans,
He ſucks intelligence in ev'ry clime,
And ſpreads the honey of his deep reſearch
At his return, a rich repaſt for me.
He travels and I too. I tread his deck,
Aſcend his topmaſt, through his peering eyes
Diſcover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes and ſhare in his eſcapes,
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is ſtill at home.

Oh Winter! ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy ſcatter'd hair with ſleet like aſhes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fring'd with a beard made white with other ſnows
Than thoſe of age; thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafleſs branch thy ſceptre, and thy throne
A ſliding car indebted to no wheels,
But urged by ſtorms along its ſlipp'ry way;
I love thee, all unlovely as thou ſeem'ſt,

And

And dreaded as thou art. Thou hold'ſt the ſun
A pris'ner in the yet undawning Eaſt,
Short'ning his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him impatient of his ſtay
Down to the roſy Weſt. But kindly ſtill
Compenſating his loſs with added hours
Of ſocial converſe and inſtructive eaſe,
And gathering at ſhort notice in one group
The family diſperſed, and fixing thought
Not leſs diſperſed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee King of intimate delights,
Fire-ſide enjoyments, home-born happineſs,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undiſturb'd retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know.
No ratt'ling wheels ſtop ſhort before theſe gates.
No powder'd pert proficient in the art
Of ſounding an alarm, aſſaults theſe doors
'Till the ſtreet rings. No ſtationary ſteeds
Cough their own knell, while heedleſs of the ſound

The ſilent circle fan themſelves, and quake.
But here the needle plies its buſy taſk,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flow'r
Wrought patiently into the ſnowy lawn
Unfolds its boſom, buds and leaves and ſprigs
And curling tendrils, gracefully diſpoſed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair,
A wreath that cannot fade, of flow'rs that blow
With moſt ſucceſs when all beſides decay.
The poet's or hiſtorian's page, by one
Made vocal for th' amuſement of the reſt;
The ſprightly lyre, whoſe treaſure of ſweet ſounds
The touch from many a trembling chord ſhakes out;
And the clear voice ſymphonious, yet diſtinct,
And in the charming ſtrife triumphant ſtill,
Beguile the night, and ſet a keener edge
On female induſtry; the threaded ſteel
Flies ſwiftly, and unfelt the taſk proceeds.
The volume cloſed, the cuſtomary rites
Of the laſt meal commence. A Roman meal,

Such as the miſtreſs of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domeſtic ſhade
Enjoyed, ſpare feaſt! a radiſh and an egg.
Diſcourſe enſues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor ſuch as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proſcribes the ſound of mirth.
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at his awful name, or deem his praiſe
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with mem'ry's pointing wand
That calls the paſt to our exact review,
The dangers we have ſcaped, the broken ſnare,
The diſappointed foe, deliv'rance found
Unlook'd for, life preſerved and peace reſtored,
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.

Oh

Oh evenings worthy of the Gods! exclaim'd
The Sabine bard. Oh evenings, I reply,
More to be prized and coveted than yours,
As more illumin'd and with nobler truths,
That I and mine and thoſe we love, enjoy.

Is winter hideous in a garb like this?
Needs he the tragic fur, the ſmoke of lamps,
The pent-up breath of an unſav'ry throng
To thaw him into feeling, or the ſmart
And ſnappiſh dialogue that flippant wits
Call comedy, to prompt him with a ſmile?
The ſelf-complacent actor when he views
(Stealing a ſidelong glance at a full houſe)
The ſlope of faces from the floor to th' roof,
(As if one maſter-ſpring controul'd them all)
Relax'd into an univerſal grin,
Sees not a count'nance there that ſpeaks a joy
Half ſo refin'd or ſo ſincere as ours.
Cards were ſuperfluous here, with all the tricks

That

That idleneſs has ever yet contrived
To fill the void of an unfurniſh'd brain,
To palliate dullneſs and give time a ſhove.
Time as he paſſes us, has a dove's wing,
Unſoiled and ſwift and of a ſilken ſound.
But the world's time, is time in maſquerade.
Theirs, ſhould I paint him, has his pinions fledg'd
With motley plumes, and where the peacock ſhows
His azure eyes, is tinctured black and red
With ſpots quadrangular of di'mond form,
Enſanguin'd hearts, clubs typical of ſtrife,
And ſpades, the emblem of untimely graves.
What ſhould be, and what was an hour-glaſs once
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard maſt
Well does the work of his deſtructive ſcythe.
Thus deck'd he charms a world whom faſhion blinds
To his true worth, moſt pleas'd when idle moſt,
Whoſe only happy are their waſted hours.
Ev'n miſſes, at whoſe age their mothers wore
The back-ſtring and the bib, aſſume the dreſs

Of womanhood, ſit pupils in the ſchool
Of card-devoted time, and night by night
Plac'd at ſome vacant corner of the board,
Learn ev'ry trick, and ſoon play all the game.
But truce with cenſure. Roving as I rove,
Where ſhall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far, oft turns aſide
To view ſome rugged rock or mould'ring tow'r,
Which ſeen delights him not; then coming home,
Deſcribes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth;
So I with bruſh in hand and pallet ſpread
With colours mixt for a far diff'rent uſe,
Paint cards and dolls, and ev'ry idle thing
That fancy finds in her excurſive flights.

Come evening once again, ſeaſon of peace,
Return ſweet evening, and continue long!
Methinks I ſee thee in the ſtreaky weſt,
With matron-ſtep ſlow-moving, while the night

Treads on thy ſweeping train; one hand employ'd
In letting fall the curtain of repoſe
On bird and beaſt, the other charged for man
With ſweet oblivion of the cares of day;
Not ſumptuouſly adorn'd, nor needing aid
Like homely-featur'd night, of cluſt'ring gems,
A ſtar or two juſt twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee; ſave that the moon is thine
No leſs than hers, not worn indeed on high
With oſtentatious pageantry, but ſet
With modeſt grandeur in thy purple zone,
Reſplendent leſs, but of an ampler round.
Come then, and thou ſhalt find thy vot'ry calm
Or make me ſo. Compoſure is thy gift.
And whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to muſic, or the poets toil,
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;
Or twining ſilken threads round iv'ry reels
When they command whom man was born to pleaſe,
I ſlight thee not, but make thee welcome ſtill.

Juſt when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights by clear reflection multiplied
From many a mirrour, in which he of Gath,
Goliah, might have ſeen his giant bulk
Whole without ſtooping, tow'ring creſt and all,
My pleaſures too begin. But me perhaps
The glowing hearth may ſatisfy awhile
With faint illumination that uplifts
The ſhadow to the cieling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quiv'ring flame.
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So ſpent in parlour twilight; ſuch a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with ſome new theme
Pregnant, or indiſpoſed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boaſt your more mercurial pow'rs
That never feel a ſtupor, know no pauſe
Nor need one. I am conſcious, and confeſs
Fearleſs, a ſoul that does not always think.
Me oft has fancy ludicrous and wild

Sooth'd with a waking dream of houſes, tow'rs,
Trees, churches, and ſtrange viſages expreſs'd
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myſelf creating what I ſaw.
Nor leſs amuſed have I quieſcent watch'd
The ſooty films tnat play upon the bars
Pendulous, and foreboding in the view
Of ſuperſtition propheſying ſtill
Though ſtill deceived, ſome ſtranger's near approach.
'Tis thus the underſtanding takes repoſe
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And ſleeps and is refreſh'd. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a maſk
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were taſk'd to his full ſtrength, abſorb'd and loſt.
Thus oft reclin'd at eaſe, I loſe an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blaſt
That ſweeps the bolted ſhutter, ſummons home
The recollected powers, and ſnapping ſhort
The glaſſy threads with which the fancy weaves

Her

Her brittle toys, reſtores me to myſelf.
How calm is my receſs! and how the froſt
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The ſilence and the warmth enjoy'd within!
I ſaw the woods and fields at cloſe of day
A variegated ſhow; the meadows green
Though faded, and the lands where lately waved
The golden harveſt, of a mellow brown,
Upturn'd ſo lately by the forceful ſhare.
I ſaw far off the weedy fallows ſmile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks faſt feeding, and ſelecting each
His fav'rite herb; while all the leafleſs groves
That ſkirt th' horizon wore a ſable hue,
Scarce noticed in the kindred duſk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change!
Which even now, though ſilently perform'd
And ſlowly, and by moſt unfelt, the face
Of univerſal nature undergoes.
Faſt falls a fleecy ſhow'r. The downy flakes

Deſcending

Deſcending and with never-ceaſing lapſe
Softly alighting upon all below,
Aſſimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thick'ning mantle, and the green
And tender blade that fear'd the chilling blaſt,
Eſcapes unhurt beneath ſo warm a veil.

In ſuch a world, ſo thorny, and where none
Finds happineſs unblighted, or if found,
Without ſome thiſtly ſorrow at its ſide,
It ſeems the part of wiſdom, and no ſin
Againſt the law of love, to meaſure lots
With leſs diſtinguiſh'd than ourſelves, that thus
We may with patience bear our mod'rate ills,
And ſympathize with others, ſuffering more.
Ill fares the trav'ller now, and he that ſtalks
In pond'rous boots beſide his reeking team.
The wain goes heavily, impeded ſore
By congregated loads adhering cloſe
To the clogg'd wheels; and in its ſluggiſh pace

Noiſeleſs,

Noiſeleſs, appears a moving hill of ſnow.
The toiling ſteeds expand the noſtril wide,
While ev'ry breath by reſpiration ſtrong
Forced downward, is conſolidated ſoon
Upon their jutting cheſts. He, form'd to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempeſtuous night,
With half-ſhut eyes and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth
Preſented bare againſt the ſtorm, plods on.
One hand ſecures his hat, ſave when with both
He brandiſhes his pliant length of whip,
Reſounding oft, and never heard in vain.
Oh happy! and in my account, denied
That ſenſibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou.
Thy frame robuſt and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpair'd.
The learned finger never need explore
Thy vig'rous pulſe, and the unhealthful Eaſt,
That breathes the ſpleen, and ſearches ev'ry bone
Of the infirm, is wholeſome air to thee.

Thy

Thy days roll on exempt from houſehold care,
Thy waggon is thy wife; and the poor beaſts
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpleſs charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah treat them kindly! rude as thou appear'ſt
Yet ſhow that thou haſt mercy, which the great
With needleſs hurry whirl'd from place to place,
Humane as they would ſeem, not always ſhow.

Poor, yet induſtrious, modeſt, quiet, neat,
Such claim compaſſion in a night like this,
And have a friend in ev'ry feeling heart.
Warm'd, while it laſts, by labor, all day long
They brave the ſeaſon, and yet find at eve
Ill clad and fed but ſparely time to cool.
The frugal houſewife trembles when ſhe lights
Her ſcanty ſtock of bruſh-wood, blazing clear
But dying ſoon, like all terreſtrial joys.
The few ſmall embers left ſhe nurſes well,
And while her infant race with outſpread hands

And crowded knees ſit cow'ring o'er the ſparks,
Retires, content to quake, ſo they be warm'd.
The man feels leaſt, as more inur'd than ſhe
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briſkly moved by his ſeverer toil;
Yet he too finds his own diſtreſs in theirs.
The taper ſoon extinguiſhed, which I ſaw
Dangled along at the cold fingers end
Juſt when the day declined, and the brown loaf
Lodged on the ſhelf half-eaten without ſauce
Of ſav'ry cheeſe, or butter coſtlier ſtill,
Sleep ſeems their only refuge. For alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,
And ſweet colloquial pleaſures are but few.
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
Ingenious parſimony takes, but juſt
Saves the ſmall inventory, bed and ſtool,
Skillet and old carved cheſt from public ſale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands, but other boaſt have none

To ſooth their honeſt pride that ſcorns to beg,
Nor comfort elſe, but in their mutual love.
I praiſe you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy; chuſing rather far
A dry but independent cruſt, hard-earn'd
And eaten with a ſigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and inſolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of diſtribution; lib'ral of their aid
To clam'rous importunity in rags,
But oft-times deaf to ſuppliants who would bluſh
To wear a tatter'd garb however coarſe,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth;
Theſe aſk with painful ſhyneſs, and refuſed
Becauſe deſerving, ſilently retire.
But be ye of good courage. Time itſelf
Shall much befriend you. Time ſhall give increaſe,
And all your num'rous progeny well train'd
But helpleſs, in few years ſhall find their hands,
And labor too. Meanwhile ye ſhall not want

What

What conſcious of your virtues we can ſpare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourſelves may ſend.
I mean the man, who when the diſtant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty with moſt who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is ſelf-inflicted woe,
Th' effect of lazineſs or ſottiſh waſte.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much ſolicitous how beſt
He may compenſate for a day of ſloth,
By works of darkneſs and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gard'ner's pale, the farmer's hedge
Plaſh'd neatly, and ſecured with driven ſtakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by ſtrength
Reſiſtleſs in ſo bad a cauſe, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the ſpoil
An aſs's burthen, and when laden moſt
And heavieſt, light of foot ſteals faſt away.
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard

The well-ſtack'd pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrench'd the door however well ſecured,
Where chanticleer amidſt his haram ſleeps
In unſuſpecting pomp. Twitched from the perch
He gives the princely bird with all his wives
To his voracious bag, ſtruggling in vain,
And loudly wond'ring at the ſudden change.
Nor this to feed his own. 'Twere ſome excuſe
Did pity of their ſufferings warp aſide
His principle, and tempt him into ſin
For their ſupport, ſo deſtitute. But they
Neglected pine at home, themſelves, as more
Expoſed than others, with leſs ſcruple made
His victims, robb'd of their defenceleſs all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchleſs thirſt
Of ruinous ebriety that prompts
His ev'ry action and imbrutes the man.
Oh for a law to nooſe the villain's neck
Who ſtarves his own. Who perſecutes the blood

He gave them in his children's veins, and hates
And wrongs the woman he has ſworn to love.

Paſs where we may, through city or through town,
Village or hamlet of this merry land,
Though lean and beggar'd, every twentieth pace
Conducts the unguarded noſe to ſuch a whiff
Of ſtale debauch forth-iſſuing from the ſtyes
That law has licenſed, as makes temp'rance reel.
There ſit involved and loſt in curling clouds
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lacquey and the groom. The craftſman there
Takes a Lethæan leave of all his toil;
Smith, cobler, joiner, he that plies the ſheers,
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,
All learned, and all drunk. The fiddle ſcreams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wailed
Its waſted tones and harmony unheard:
Fierce the diſpute whate'er the theme. While ſhe,
Fell Diſcord, arbitreſs of ſuch debate,

Perch'd on the ſign-poſt, holds with even hand
Her undeciſive ſcales. In this ſhe lays
A weight of ignorance, in that, of pride,
And ſmiles delighted with th' eternal poiſe.
Dire is the frequent curſe and its twin ſound
The cheek-diſtending oath, not to be praiſed
As ornamental, muſical, polite,
Like thoſe which modern ſenators employ,
Whoſe oath is rhet'ric, and who ſwear for fame.
Behold the ſchools in which plebeian minds,
Once ſimple, are initiated in arts
Which ſome may practiſe with politer grace,
But none with readier ſkill! 'tis here they learn
The road that leads from competence and peace
To indigence and rapine; till at laſt
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her incumber'd lap, and caſts them out.
But cenſure profits little. Vain th' attempt
To advertiſe in verſe a public peſt,
That, like the filth with which the peaſant feeds

His hungry acres, ſtinks and is of uſe.
Th' exciſe is fatten'd with the rich reſult
Of all this riot. And ten thouſand caſks,
For ever dribbling out their baſe contents,
Touch'd by the Midas finger of the ſtate,
Bleed gold for Miniſters to ſport away.
Drink and be mad then. 'Tis your country bids.
Glorioufly drunk obey th' important call,
Her cauſe demands th' aſſiſtance of your throats,
Ye all can ſwallow, and ſhe aſks no more.

Would I had fall'n upon thoſe happier days
That poets celebrate. Thoſe golden times
And thoſe Arcadian ſcenes that Maro ſings,
And Sydney, warbler of poetic proſe.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and ſwains had hearts
That felt their virtues. Innocence it ſeems,
From courts diſmiſs'd, found ſhelter in the groves.
The footſteps of ſimplicity impreſs'd
Upon the yielding herbage (ſo they ſing)

Then were not all effaced. Then ſpeech profane
And manners profligate were rarely found,
Obſerved as prodigies, and ſoon reclaim'd.
Vain wiſh! thoſe days were never. Airy dreams
Sat for the picture. And the poet's hand
Imparting ſubſtance to an empty ſhade,
Impoſed a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it. I ſtill muſt envy them an age
That favor'd ſuch a dream, in days like theſe
Impoſſible, when virtue is ſo ſcarce,
That to ſuppoſe a ſcene where ſhe preſides
Is tramontane, and ſtumbles all belief.
No. We are poliſh'd now. The rural laſs,
Whom once her virgin modeſty and grace,
Her artleſs manners and her neat attire,
So dignified, that ſhe was hardly leſs
Than the fair ſhepherdeſs of old romance,
Is ſeen no more. The character is loſt.
Her head adorn'd with lappets pinn'd aloft
And ribbands ſtreaming gay, ſuperbly raiſed

And magnified beyond all human ſize,
Indebted to ſome ſmart wig-weaver's hand
For more than half the treſſes it ſuſtains;
Her elbows ruffled, and her tott'ring form
Ill propp'd upon French heels; ſhe might be deemed
(But that the baſket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy-work or ſale of eggs.
Expect her ſoon with foot-boy at her heels,
No longer bluſhing for her aukward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care.

The town has tinged the country. And the ſtain
Appears a ſpot upon a veſtal's robe,
The worſe for what it ſoils. The faſhion runs
Down into ſcenes ſtill rural, but alas!
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now.
Time was when in the paſtoral retreat
Th' unguarded door was ſafe. Men did not watch
T' invade another's right, or guard their own.

Then ſleep was undiſturb'd by fear, unſcared
By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murther was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unſuſpicious nights
And ſlumbers unalarm'd. Now ere you ſleep
See that your poliſh'd arms be prim'd with care,
And drop the night-bolt. Ruffians are abroad,
And the firſt larum of the cock's ſhrill throat
May prove a trumpet, ſummoning your ear
To horrid ſounds of hoſtile feet within.
Ev'n daylight has its dangers. And the walk
Through pathleſs waſtes and woods, unconſcious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds
Or harmleſs flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change! to which full many a cauſe
Invet'rate, hopeleſs of a cure, conſpires.
The courſe of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worſe, is fatal, never fails.
Increaſe of pow'r begets increaſe of wealth,

Wealth

Wealth luxury, and luxury exceſs;
Exceſs, the ſcrophulous and itchy plague
That ſeizes firſt the opulent, deſcends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downward all the graduated ſcale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check
The licence of the loweſt in degree,
Deſert their office; and themſelves intent
On pleaſure, haunt the capital, and thus,
To all the violence of lawleſs hands
Reſign the ſcenes their preſence might protect.
Authority herſelf not ſeldom ſleeps,
Though reſident, and witneſs of the wrong.
The plump convivial parſon often bears
The magiſterial ſword in vain, and lays
His rev'rence and his worſhip both to reſt
On the ſame cuſhion of habitual ſloth.
Perhaps timidity reſtrains his arm,
When he ſhould ſtrike, he trembles, and ſets free,

Himſelf enſlaved by terror of the band,
Th' audacious convict whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profeſſion ghoſtly pure,
He too may have his vice, and ſometimes prove
Leſs dainty than becomes his grave outſide,
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milk-white hand. The palm is hardly clean—
But here and there an ugly ſmutch appears.
Foh! 'twas a bribe that left it. He has touched
Corruption. Whoſo ſeeks an audit here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fiſh,
Wildfowl or ven'ſon, and his errand ſpeeds.

But faſter far and more than all the reſt
A noble cauſe, which none who bears a ſpark
Of public virtue ever wiſh'd removed,
Works the deplor'd and miſchievous effect.
'Tis univerſal ſoldierſhip has ſtabb'd
The heart of merit in the meaner claſs.
Arms, through the vanity and brainleſs rage

Of

Of thoſe that bear them, in whatever cauſe,
Seem moſt at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with ſerious thought.
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Bleſt with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own ſimple pleaſures, now and then
A wreſtling match, a foot-race, or a fair,
Is ballotted, and trembles at the news.
Sheepiſh he doffs his hat, and mumbling ſwears
A Bible-oath to be whate'er they pleaſe,
To do he knows not what. The taſk perform'd,
That inſtant he becomes the ſerjeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jeſt.
His aukward gait, his introverted toes,
Bent knees, round ſhoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curſe. By ſlow degrees,
Unapt to learn and formed of ſtubborn ſtuff,
He yet by ſlow degrees puts off himſelf,
Grows conſcious of a change, and likes it well.
He ſtands erect, his ſlouch becomes a walk,

He ſteps right onward, martial in his air
His form and movement; is as ſmart above
As meal and larded locks can make him; wears
His hat or his plumed helmet with a grace,
And his three years of heroſhip expired,
Returns indignant to the ſlighted plough.
He hates the field in which no fife or drum
Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,
And ſighs for the ſmart comrades he has left.
'Twere well if his exterior change were all—
But with his clumſy port the wretch has loſt
His ignorance and harmleſs manners too.
To ſwear, to game, to drink, to ſhew at home
By lewdneſs, idleneſs, and ſabbath-breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad,
T' aſtoniſh and to grieve his gazing friends,
To break ſome maiden's and his mother's heart,
To be a peſt where he was uſeful once,
Are his ſole aim, and all his glory now.

Man

Man in ſociety is like a flow'r
Blown in its native bed. 'Tis there alone
His faculties expanded in full bloom
Shine out, there only reach their proper uſe.
But man aſſociated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or ſelf-joined by bond
For intereſt-ſake, or ſwarming into clans
Beneath one head for purpoſes of war,
Like flow'rs ſelected from the reſt, and bound
And bundled cloſe to fill ſome crowded vaſe,
Fades rapidly, and by compreſſion marred
Contracts defilement not to be endured.
Hence charter'd boroughs are ſuch public plagues,
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathſome body, only fit
For diſſolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of ſin
Againſt the charities of domeſtic life,
Incorporated, ſeem at once to loſe

Their

Their nature, and diſclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the ſword's point, and dying the white robe
Of innocent commercial juſtice red.
Hence too the field of glory, as the world
Miſdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all the majeſty of its thund'ring pomp,
Enchanting muſic and immortal wreaths,
Is but a ſchool where thoughtleſſneſs is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for ev'ry vice.

But ſlighted as it is, and by the great
Abandon'd, and, which ſtill I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me ſtill.
I never fram'd a wiſh, or form'd a plan
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliſs,
But there I laid the ſcene. There early ſtray'd

My

My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural, rural too
The firſt-born efforts of my youthful muſe,
Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
Ere yet her ear was miſtreſs of their pow'rs.
No bard could pleaſe me but whoſe lyre was tuned
To Nature's praiſes. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, aſſembling as he ſang
The ruſtic throng beneath his fav'rite beech.
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms.
New to my taſte, his Paradiſe ſurpaſs'd
The ſtruggling efforts of my boyiſh tongue
To ſpeak its excellence; I danced for joy.
I marvel'd much that at ſo ripe an age
As twice ſev'n years, his beauties had then firſt
Engaged my wonder, and admiring ſtill
And ſtill admiring, with regret ſuppoſed
The joy half loſt becauſe not ſooner found.

Thee too enamour'd of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praiſe, in its purſuit
Determined, and poſſeſſing it at laſt
With tranſports ſuch as favor'd lovers feel,
I ſtudied, prized, and wiſhed that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley! and though now, reclaimed
By modern lights from an erroneous taſte,
I cannot but lament thy ſplendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the ſchools,
I ſtill revere thee, courtly though retired,
Though ſtretch'd at eaſe in Chertſey's ſilent bow'rs
Not unemploy'd, and finding rich amends
For a loſt world in ſolitude and verſe.
'Tis born with all. The love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound, man,
Infuſed at the creation of the kind.
And though th' Almighty Maker, has throughout
Diſcriminated each from each, by ſtrokes
And touches of his hand with ſo much art
Diverſified, that two were never found

Twins

Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,
That all diſcern a beauty in his works
And all can taſte them. Minds that have been form'd
And tutor'd, with a reliſh more exact,
But none without ſome reliſh, none unmoved.
It is a flame that dies not even there
Where nothing feeds it. Neither buſineſs, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city-life,
Whatever elſe they ſmother of true worth
In human boſoms, quench it or abate.
The villas with which London ſtands begirt
Like a ſwarth Indian with his belt of beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadult'rate air,
The glimpſe of a green paſture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!
Ev'n in the ſtifling boſom of the town,
A garden in which nothing thrives, has charms
That ſooth the rich poſſeſſor; much conſoled
That here and there ſome ſprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightſhade or valerian, grace the wall

He cultivates. Theſe ſerve him with a hint
That Nature lives, that ſight-refreſhing green
Is ſtill the livery ſhe delights to wear,
Though ſickly ſamples of th' exub'rant whole.
What are the caſements lined with creeping herbs,
The prouder ſaſhes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed
The Frenchman's * darling? are they not all proofs
That man, immured in cities, ſtill retains
His inborn inextinguiſhable thirſt
Of rural ſcenes, compenſating his loſs
By ſupplemental ſhifts, the beſt he may?
The moſt unfurniſhed with the means of life,
And they that never paſs their brick-wall bounds
To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning inſtinct: over-head
Suſpend their crazy boxes planted thick
And water'd duly. There the pitcher ſtands

A fragment,

* Mignonette.

A fragment, and the ſpoutleſs tea-pot there;
Sad witneſſes how cloſe-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardour he contrives
A peep at nature, when he can no more.

Hail, therefore, patroneſs of health and eaſe
And contemplation, heart-conſoling joys
And harmleſs pleaſures, in the throng'd abode
Of multitudes unknown, hail rural life!
Addreſs himſelf who will to the purſuit
Of honors or emolument or fame,
I ſhall not add myſelf to ſuch a chace,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his ſucceſs.
Some muſt be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to ev'ry man
The virtue, temper, underſtanding, taſte,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Juſt in the niche he was ordain'd to fill.
To the deliv'rer of an injured land
He gives a tongue t' enlarge upon, an heart

To feel, and courage to redreſs her wrongs;
To monarchs dignity, to judges ſenſe,
To artiſts ingenuity and ſkill;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wiſh for eaſe and leiſure, and ere long
Found here that leiſure and that eaſe I wiſh'd.

THE

TASK.

BOOK V.

ARGUMENT of the FIFTH BOOK.

A frosty morning.—The foddering of cattle.—The woodman and his dog.—The poultry.—Whimsical effects of frost at a waterfall.—The Empress of Russia's palace of ice.—Amusements of monarchs.—War one of them.—Wars, whence.—And whence monarchy.—The evils of it.—English and French loyalty contrasted.—The Bastile, and a prisoner there.—Liberty the chief recommendation of this country.—Modern patriotism questionable, and why.—The perishable nature of the best human institutions.—Spiritual liberty not perishable.—The slavish state of man by nature.—Deliver him, Deist, if you can.—Grace must do it.—The respective merits of patriots and martyrs stated.—Their different treatment.—Happy freedom of the man whom grace makes free.—His relish of the works of God.—Address to the Creator.

THE TASK.

BOOK V.

THE WINTER MORNING WALK.

'TIS morning; and the ſun with ruddy orb
Aſcending fires the horizon. While the clouds
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the diſk emerges more,
Reſemble moſt ſome city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafleſs wood. His ſlanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the ſnowy vale,
And tinging all with his own roſy hue,
From ev'ry herb and ev'ry ſpiry blade
Stretches a length of ſhadow o'er the field.
Mine, ſpindling into longitude immenſe,

In ſpite of gravity and ſage remark
That I myſelf am but a fleeting ſhade,
Provokes me to a ſmile. With eye aſkance
I view the muſcular proportioned limb
Transformed to a lean ſhank. The ſhapeleſs pair
As they deſigned to mock me, at my ſide
Take ſtep for ſtep, and as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plaiſter'd wall
Propoſt'rous ſight! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge, and the bents
And coarſer graſs upſpearing o'er the reſt,
Of late unſightly and unſeen, now ſhine
Conſpicuous, and in bright apparel clad
And fledged with icy feathers, nod ſuperb.
The cattle mourn in corners where the fence
Screens them, and ſeem half petrified to ſleep
In unrecumbent ſadneſs. There they wait
Their wonted fodder, not like hung'ring man
Fretful if unſupplied, but ſilent, meek,

And patient of the ſlow-paced ſwain's delay.
He from the ſtack carves out th' accuſtomed load,
Deep plunging and again deep plunging oft
His broad keen knife into the ſolid maſs.
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant ſtands,
With ſuch undeviating and even force
He ſevers it away. No needleſs care,
Leſt ſtorms ſhould overſet the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcerned
The cheerful haunts of man, to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder foreſt drear,
From morn to eve his ſolitary taſk.
Shaggy and lean and ſhrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropp'd ſhort, half lurcher and half cur
His dog attends him. Cloſe behind his heel
Now creeps he ſlow, and now with many a friſk
Wide-ſcampering ſnatches up the drifted ſnow
With iv'ry teeth, or ploughs it with his ſnout;
Then ſhakes his powder'd coat and barks for joy.

Heedleſs of all his pranks the ſturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark. Nor ſtops for aught,
But now and then with preſſure of his thumb
T' adjuſt the fragrant charge of a ſhort tube
That fumes beneath his noſe. The trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, ſcenting all the air.
Now from the rooſt or from the neighb'ring pale,
Where diligent to catch the firſt faint gleam
Of ſmiling day, they goſſipp'd ſide by ſide,
Come trooping at the houſewife's well-known call
The feather'd tribes domeſtic. Half on wing
And half on foot, they bruſh the fleecy flood
Conſcious, and fearful of too deep a plunge.
The ſparrows peep, and quit the ſhelt'ring eaves
To ſeize the fair occaſion. Well they eye
The ſcatter'd grain, and thieviſhly reſolved
T' eſcape th' impending famine, often ſcared
As oft return, a pert voracious kind.
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
Remains to each, the ſearch of ſunny nook,

Or ſhed impervious to the blaſt. Reſign'd
To ſad neceſſity the cock foregoes
His wonted ſtrut, and wading at their head
With well-conſidered ſteps, ſeems to reſent
His alter'd gait and ſtatelineſs retrenched.
How find the myriads that in ſummer cheer
The hills and vallies with their ceaſeleſs ſongs
Due ſuſtenance, or where ſubſiſt they now?
Earth yields them nought: the impriſon'd worm is ſafe
Beneath the frozen clod; all ſeeds of herbs
Lie covered cloſe, and berry-bearing thorns
That feed the thruſh (whatever ſome ſuppoſe)
Afford the ſmaller minſtrels no ſupply.
The long protracted rigor of the year
Thins all their num'rous flocks. In chinks and holes
Ten thouſand ſeek an unmoleſted end
As inſtinct prompts, ſelf buried ere they die.
The very rooks and daws forſake the fields,
Where neither grub nor root nor earth-nut now
Repays their labor more; and perch'd aloft

By the way-ſide, or ſtalking in the path,
Lean penſioners upon the trav'ller's track,
Pick up their nauſeous dole, though ſweet to them,
Of voided pulſe or half digeſted grain.
The ſtreams are loſt amid the ſplendid blank
O'erwhelming all diſtinction. On the flood
Indurated and fixt the ſnowy weight
Lies undiſſolved, while ſilently beneath
And unperceived the current ſteals away.
Not ſo, where ſcornful of a check it leaps
The mill-dam, daſhes on the reſtleſs wheel,
And wantons in the pebbly gulph below.
No froſt can bind it there. Its utmoſt force
Can but arreſt the light and ſmoky miſt
That in its fall the liquid ſheet throws wide.
And ſee where it has hung th' embroidered banks
With forms ſo various, that no pow'rs of art,
The pencil or the pen, may trace the ſcene!
Here glitt'ring turrets riſe, upbearing high
(Fantaſtic miſarrangement) on the roof

Large growth of what may ſeem the ſparkling trees
And ſhrubs of fairy land. The chryſtal drops
That trickle down the branches, faſt congeal'd
Shoot into pillars of pellucid length,
And prop the pile they but adorned before.
Here grotto within grotto ſafe defies
The ſun-beam. There imboſs'd and fretted wild
The growing wonder takes a thouſand ſhapes
Capricious, in which fancy ſeeks in vain
The likeneſs of ſome object ſeen before.
Thus nature works as if to mock at art,
And in defiance of her rival pow'rs;
By theſe fortuitous and random ſtrokes
Performing ſuch inimitable feats
As ſhe with all her rules can never reach.
Leſs worthy of applauſe though more admired,
Becauſe a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial miſtreſs of the fur-clad Ruſs!
Thy moſt magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the North. No foreſt fell

When

When thou would'ſt build: no quarry ſent its ſtore
T' enrich thy walls. But thou didſt hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glaſſy wave.
In ſuch a palace Ariſtæus found
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale
Of his loſt bees to her maternal ear.
In ſuch a palace poetry might place
The armoury of winter, where his troops
The gloomy clouds find weapons, arrowy ſleet
Skin-piercing volley, bloſſom-bruiſing hail,
And ſnow that often blinds the trav'ller's courſe,
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.
Silently as a dream the fabric roſe.
No ſound of hammer or of ſaw was there.
Ice upon ice, the well-adjuſted parts
Were ſoon conjoined, nor other cement aſk'd
Than water interfuſed to make them one.
Lamps gracefully diſpoſed and of all hues
Illumined ev'ry ſide. A wat'ry light
Gleamed through the clear tranſparency, that ſeemed

Another

Another moon new-riſen, or meteor fall'n
From heav'n to earth, of lambent flame ſerene.
So ſtood the brittle prodigy, though ſmooth
And ſlipp'ry the materials, yet froſt-bound
Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within
That royal reſidence might well befit,
For grandeur or for uſe. Long wavy wreaths
Of flow'rs that feared no enemy but warmth,
Bluſhed on the pannels. Mirrour needed none
Where all was vitreous, but in order due
Convivial table and commodious ſeat
(What ſeemed at leaſt commodious ſeat) were there,
Sofa and couch and high-built throne auguſt.
The ſame lubricity was found in all,
And all was moiſt to the warm touch, a ſcene
Of evaneſcent glory, once a ſtream,
And ſoon to ſlide into a ſtream again.
Alas! 'twas but a mortifying ſtroke
Of undeſigned ſeverity, that glanced,
(Made by a monarch) on her own eſtate,

On

On human grandeur and the courts of kings.
'Twas tranſient in its nature, as in ſhow
'Twas durable. As worthleſs as it ſeemed
Intrinſically precious. To the foot
Treach'rous and falſe, it ſmiled and it was cold.

Great princes have great play-things. Some have
At hewing mountains into men, and ſome [played
At building human wonders mountain high.
Some have amuſed the dull ſad years of life,
Life ſpent in indolence, and therefore ſad,
With ſchemes of monumental fame, and ſought
By pyramids and mauſolæan pomp,
Short-lived themſelves, t' immortalize their bones.
Some ſeek diverſion in the tented field,
And make the ſorrows of mankind their ſport.
But war's a game, which were their ſubjects wiſe,
Kings ſhould not play at. Nations would do well
T' extort their truncheons from the puny hands
Of heroes, whoſe infirm and baby minds

Are

Are gratified with miſchief, and who ſpoil
Becauſe men ſuffer it, their toy the world.

When Babel was confounded, and the great
Confed'racy of projectors wild and vain
Was ſplit into diverſity of tongues,
Then, as a ſhepherd ſeparates his flock,
Theſe to the upland, to the valley thoſe,
God drave aſunder and aſſigned their lot
To all the nations. Ample was the boon
He gave them, in its diſtribution fair
And equal, and he bade them dwell in peace.
Peace was awhile their care. They plough'd and ſow'd
And reap'd their plenty without grudge or ſtriſe.
But violence can never longer ſleep
Than human paſſions pleaſe. In ev'ry heart
Are ſown the ſparks that kindle fiery war,
Occaſion needs but fan them, and they blaze.
Cain had already ſhed a brother's blood;
The deluge waſh'd it out; but left unquenched

The ſeeds of murther in the breaſt of man.
Soon, by a righteous judgment, in the line
Of his deſcending progeny was found
The firſt artificer of death; the ſhrewd
Contriver who firſt ſweated at the forge,
And forced the blunt and yet unblooded ſteel
To a keen edge, and made it bright for war.
Him Tubal named, the Vulcan of old times,
The ſword and faulchion their inventor claim,
And the firſt ſmith was the firſt murd'rer's ſon.
His art ſurvived the waters; and ere long
When man was multiplied and ſpread abroad
In tribes and clans, and had begun to call
Theſe meadows and that range of hills his own,
The taſted ſweets of property begat
Deſire of more; and induſtry in ſome
To improve and cultivate their juſt demeſne,
Made others covet what they ſaw ſo fair.
Thus wars began on earth. Theſe fought for ſpoil,
And thoſe in ſelf-defence. Savage at firſt

The onſet, and irregular. At length
One eminent above the reſt, for ſtrength,
For ſtratagem or courage, or for all,
Was choſen leader. Him they ſerved in war,
And him in peace for ſake of warlike deeds
Rev'renced no leſs. Who could with him compare?
Or who ſo worthy to controul themſelves
As he whoſe proweſs had ſubdued their foes?
Thus war affording field for the diſplay
Of virtue, made one chief, whom times of peace,
Which have their exigencies too, and call
For ſkill in government, at length made king.
King was a name too proud for man to wear
With modeſty and meekneſs, and the crown,
So dazzling in their eyes who ſet it on,
Was ſure t' intoxicate the brows it bound.
It is the abject property of moſt,
That being parcel of the common maſs,
And deſtitute of means to raiſe themſelves,
They ſink and ſettle lower than they need.

They know not what it is to feel within
A comprehenſive faculty that graſps
Great purpoſes with eaſe, that turns and wields,
Almoſt without an effort, plans too vaſt
For their conception, which they cannot move.
Conſcious of impotence they ſoon grow drunk
With gazing, when they ſee an able man
Step forth to notice; and beſotted thus
Build him a pedeſtal and ſay, ſtand there,
And be our admiration and our praiſe.
They roll themſelves before him in the duſt,
Then moſt deſerving in their own account
When moſt extravagant in his applauſe,
As if exalting him they raiſed themſelves.
Thus by degrees ſelf-cheated of their ſound
And ſober judgment that he is but man,
They demi-deify and fume him ſo
That in due ſeaſon he forgets it too.
Inflated and aſtrut with ſelf-conceit
He gulps the windy diet, and ere long

Adopting their miſtake, profoundly thinks
The world was made in vain if not for him.
Thenceforth they are his cattle. Drudges born
To bear his burthens, drawing in his gears
And ſweating in his ſervice. His caprice
Becomes the ſoul that animates them all.
He deems a thouſand or ten thouſand lives
Spent in the purchaſe of renown for him
An eaſy reck'ning, and they think the ſame.
Thus kings were firſt invented, and thus kings
Were burniſhed into heroes, and became
The arbiters of this terraqueous ſwamp,
Storks among frogs, that have but croak'd and died.
Strange that ſuch folly as lifts bloated man
To eminence fit only for a God,
Should ever drivel out of human lips
Ev'n in the cradled weakneſs of the world!
Still ſtranger much, that when at length mankind
Had reached the ſinewy firmneſs of their youth,
And could diſcriminate and argue well

On ſubjects more myſterious, they were yet
Babes in the cauſe of freedom, and ſhould fear
And quake before the Gods themſelves had made.
But above meaſure ſtrange, that neither proof
Of ſad experience, nor examples ſet
By ſome whoſe patriot virtue has prevailed,
Can even now, when they are grown mature
In wiſdom, and with philoſophic deeps
Familiar, ſerve t' emancipate the reſt!
Such dupes are men to cuſtom, and ſo prone
To rev'rence what is ancient and can plead
A courſe of long obſervance for its uſe,
That even ſervitude, the worſt of ills,
Becauſe deliver'd down from ſire to ſon,
Is kept and guarded as a ſacred thing.
But is it fit, or can it bear the ſhock
Of rational diſcuſſion, that a man,
Compounded and made up like other men
Of elements tumultuous, in whom luſt
And folly in as ample meaſure meet

As in the boſoms of the ſlaves he rules,
Should be a deſpot abſolute, and boaſt
Himſelf the only freeman of his land?
Should when he pleaſes, and on whom he will,
Wage war, with any or with no pretence
Of provocation giv'n or wrong ſuſtained,
And force the beggarly laſt doit, by means
That his own humour dictates, from the clutch
Of poverty, that thus he may procure
His thouſands, weary of penurious life,
A ſplendid opportunity to die?
Say ye, who (with leſs prudence than of old
Jotham aſcribed to his aſſembled trees
In politic convention) put your truſt
I' th' ſhadow of a bramble, and reclined
In fancied peace beneath his dang'rous branch,
Rejoice in him and celebrate his ſway,
Where find ye paſſive fortitude? Whence ſprings
Your ſelf-denying zeal that holds it good
To ſtroke the prickly grievance, and to hang

His thorns with ſtreamers of continual praiſe?
We too are friends to loyalty. We love
The king who loves the law; reſpects his bounds
And reigns content within them. Him we ſerve
Freely and with delight, who leaves us free.
But recollecting ſtill that he is man,
We truſt him not too far. King though he be,
And king in England too, he may be weak
And vain enough to be ambitious ſtill,
May exerciſe amiſs his proper pow'rs,
Or covet more than freemen chuſe to grant;
Beyond that mark is treaſon. He is ours,
T' adminiſter, to guard, t' adorn the ſtate,
But not to warp or change it. We are his,
To ſerve him nobly in the common cauſe
True to the death, but not to be his ſlaves.
Mark now the diff'rence, ye that boaſt your love
Of kings, between your loyalty and ours.
We love the man. The paultry pageant you.
We the chief patron of the Commonwealth;

You the regardleſs author of its woes.
We for the ſake of liberty, a king;
You chains and bondage for a tyrant's ſake.
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reaſon, is judicious, manly, free.
Yours, a blind inſtinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the duſt.
Were kingſhip as true treaſure as it ſeems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wiſe man's wiſh,
I would not be a king to be beloved
Cauſeleſs, and daubed with undiſcerning praiſe,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.

Whoſe freedom is by ſuff'rance, and at will
Of a ſuperior, he is never free.
Who lives, and is not weary of a life
Expoſed to manacles, deſerves them well.
The ſtate that ſtrives for liberty, though foiled
And forced t' abandon what ſhe bravely ſought,

Deſerves at leaſt applauſe for her attempt,
And pity for her loſs. But that's a cauſe
Not often unſucceſsful; pow'r uſurp'd
Is weakneſs when oppos'd; conſcious of wrong
'Tis puſillanimous and prone to flight.
But ſlaves that once conceive the glowing thought
Of freedom, in that hope itſelf poſſeſs
All that the conteſt calls for; ſpirit, ſtrength,
The ſcorn of danger, and united hearts
The ſureſt preſage of the good they ſeek *.

Then ſhame to manhood, and opprobrious more
To France, than all her loſſes and defeats
Old or of later date, by ſea or land,

* The author hopes that he ſhall not be cenſured for unneceſſary warmth upon ſo intereſting a ſubject. He is aware that it is become almoſt faſhionable to ſtigmatize ſuch ſentiments as no better than empty declamation. But it is an ill ſymptom, and peculiar to modern times.

Her

Her houſe of bondage worſe than that of old
Which God avenged on Pharaoh—the Baſtile.
Ye horrid tow'rs, th' abode of broken hearts,
Ye dungeons and ye cages of deſpair,
That monarchs have ſupplied from age to age
With muſic ſuch as ſuits their ſov'reign ears,
The ſighs and groans of miſerable men!
There's not an Engliſh heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fall'n at laſt, to know
That ev'n our enemies, ſo oft employed
In forging chains for us, themſelves were free.
For he that values liberty, confines
His zeal for her predominance within
No narrow bounds; her cauſe engages him
Wherever pleaded. 'Tis the cauſe of man.
There dwell the moſt forlorn of human kind
Immured though unaccuſed, condemn'd untried,
Cruelly ſpared, and hopeleſs of eſcape.
There, like the viſionary emblem ſeen
By him of Babylon, life ſtands a ſtump,

And

And filletted about with hoops of braſs,
Still lives, though all its pleaſant boughs are gone.
To count the hour-bell and expect no change;
And ever as the ſullen ſound is heard,
Still to reflect that though a joyleſs note
To him whoſe moments all have one dull pace,
Ten thouſand rovers in the world at large
Account it muſic; that it ſummons ſome
To theatre or jocund feaſt or ball;
The wearied hireling finds it a releaſe
From labor, and the lover that has chid
Its long delay, feels ev'ry welcome ſtroke
Upon his heart-ſtrings trembling with delight—
To fly for refuge from diſtracting thought
To ſuch amuſements as ingenious woe
Contrives, hard-ſhifting and without her tools—
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,
In ſtagg'ring types, his predeceſſor's tale,
A ſad memorial, and ſubjoin his own—
To turn purveyor to an overgorged

And

And bloated ſpider, till the pamper'd peſt
Is made familiar, watches his approach,
Comes at his call, and ſerves him for a friend—
To wear out time in numb'ring to and fro
The ſtuds that thick emboſs his iron door,
Then downward and then upward, then aſlant
And then alternate, with a ſickly hope
By dint of change to give his taſteleſs taſk
Some reliſh, till the ſum exactly found
In all directions, he begins again—
Oh comfortleſs exiſtence! hemm'd around
With woes, which who that ſuffers, would not kneel
And beg for exile, or the pangs of death?
That man ſhould thus encroach on fellow man,
Abridge him of his juſt and native rights,
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold
Upon th' endearments of domeſtic life
And ſocial, nip his fruitfulneſs and uſe,
And doom him for perhaps an heedleſs word
To barrenneſs and ſolitude and tears,

Moves

Moves indignation. Makes the name of king,
(Of king whom ſuch prerogative can pleaſe)
As dreadful as the Manichean God,
Adored through fear, ſtrong only to deſtroy.

'Tis liberty alone that gives the flow'r
Of fleeting life its luſtre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it. All conſtraint,
Except what wiſdom lays on evil men,
Is evil; hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progreſs in the road of ſcience; blinds
The eyeſight of diſcov'ry, and begets
In thoſe that ſuffer it, a ſordid mind
Beſtial, a meagre intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form.
Thee therefore ſtill, blame-worthy as thou art,
With all thy loſs of empire, and though ſqueezed
By public exigence 'till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the ſtate,
Thee I account ſtill happy, and the chief

Among

Among the nations, ſeeing thou art free!
My native nook of earth! thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and diſpoſes much
All hearts to ſadneſs, and none more than mine;
Thine unadult'rate manners are leſs ſoft
And plauſible than ſocial life requires,
And thou haſt need of diſcipline and art
To give thee what politer France receives
From Nature's bounty—that humane addreſs
And ſweetneſs, without which no pleaſure is
In converſe, either ſtarved by cold reſerve,
Or fluſh'd with fierce diſpute, a ſenſeleſs brawl;
Yet being free, I love thee. For the ſake
Of that one feature, can be well content,
Diſgraced as thou haſt been, poor as thou art,
To ſeek no ſublunary reſt beſide.
But once enſlaved, farewell! I could endure
Chains no where patiently, and chains at home
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.
Then what were left of roughneſs in the grain

Of Britiſh natures, wanting its excuſe
That it belongs to freemen, would diſguſt
And ſhock me. I ſhould then with double pain
Feel all the rigor of thy fickle clime,
And if I muſt bewail the bleſſing loſt
For which our Hampdens and our Sidneys bled,
I would at leaſt bewail it under ſkies
Milder, among a people leſs auſtere,
In ſcenes which, having never known me free,
Would not reproach me with the loſs I felt.
Do I forebode impoſſible events,
And tremble at vain dreams? Heav'n grant I may!
But th' age of virtuous politics is paſt,
And we are deep in that of cold pretence.
Patriots are grown too ſhrewd to be ſincere,
And we too wiſe to truſt them. He that takes
Deep in his ſoft credulity the ſtamp
Deſigned by loud declaimers on the part
Of liberty, themſelves the ſlaves of luſt,
Incurs deriſion for his eaſy faith

And lack of knowledge, and with cauſe enough!
For when was public virtue to be found
Where private was not? Can he love the whole
Who loves no part? he be a nation's friend
Who is, in truth, the friend of no man there?
Can he be ſtrenuous in his country's cauſe,
Who ſlights the charities for whoſe dear ſake
That country, if at all, muſt be beloved?
—'Tis therefore, ſober and good men are ſad
For England's glory, ſeeing it wax pale
And ſickly, while her champions wear their hearts
So looſe to private duty, that no brain,
Healthful and undiſturbed by factious fumes,
Can dream them truſty to the gen'ral weal.
Such were not they of old, whoſe temper'd blades
Diſperſed the ſhackles of uſurp'd controul,
And hew'd them link from link. Then Albion's ſons
Were ſons indeed. They felt a filial heart
Beat high within them at a mother's wrongs,
And ſhining each in his domeſtic ſphere,

Shone

Shone brighter ſtill once call'd to public view.
'Tis therefore, many whoſe ſequeſter'd lot
Forbids their interference, looking on
Anticipate perforce ſome dire event;
And ſeeing the old caſtle of the ſtate,
That promiſed once more firmneſs, ſo aſſail'd
That all its tempeſt-beaten turrets ſhake,
Stand motionleſs expectants of its fall.
All has its date below. The fatal hour
Was regiſter'd in heaven ere time began.
We turn to duſt, and all our mightieſt works
Die too. The deep foundations that we lay,
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock,
A diſtant age aſks where the fabric ſtood,
And in the duſt, ſifted and ſearch'd in vain,
The undiſcoverable ſecret ſleeps.

But there is yet a liberty unſung
By poets, and by ſenators unpraiſed,

Which

Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the powers
Of earth and hell confed'rate take away.
A liberty, which perſecution, fraud,
Oppreſſion, priſons, have no power to bind,
Which whoſo taſtes can be enſlaved no more.
'Tis liberty of heart, derived from heav'n,
Bought with HIS blood who gave it to mankind,
And ſeal'd with the ſame token. It is held
By charter, and that charter ſanction'd ſure
By th' unimpeachable and awful oath
And promiſe of a God. His other gifts
All bear the royal ſtamp that ſpeaks them his,
And are auguſt, but this tranſcends them all.
His other works, this viſible diſplay
Of all-creating energy and might,
Are grand no doubt, and worthy of the word
That finding an interminable ſpace
Unoccupied, has filled the void ſo well,
And made ſo ſparkling what was dark before.
But theſe are not his glory. Man, 'tis true,

Smit with the beauty of ſo fair a ſcene,
Might well ſuppoſe th' artificer divine
Meant it eternal, had he not himſelf
Pronounced it tranſient, glorious as it is,
And ſtill deſigning a more glorious far,
Doom'd it, as inſufficient for his praiſe.
Theſe therefore are occaſional and paſs.
Form'd for the confutation of the fool
Whoſe lying heart diſputes againſt a God,
That office ſerv'd, they muſt be ſwept away.
Not ſo the labours of his love. They ſhine
In other heav'ns than theſe that we behold,
And fade not. There is paradiſe that fears
No forfeiture, and of its fruits he ſends
Large prelibation oft to ſaints below.
Of theſe the firſt in order, and the pledge
And confident aſſurance of the reſt,
Is liberty. A flight into his arms
Ere yet mortality's fine threads give way,

A clear

A clear eſcape from tyrannizing luſt,
And full immunity from penal woe.

Chains are the portion of revolted man,
Stripes and a dungeon; and his body ſerves
The triple purpoſe. In that ſickly, foul,
Opprobrious reſidence, he finds them all.
Propenſe his heart to idols, he is held
In ſilly dotage on created things
Careleſs of their Creator. And that low
And ſordid gravitation of his pow'rs
To a vile clod, ſo draws him with ſuch force
Reſiſtleſs from the center he ſhould ſeek,
That he at laſt forgets it. All his hopes
Tend downward, his ambition is to ſink,
To reach a depth profounder ſtill, and ſtill
Profounder, in the fathomleſs abyſs
Of folly, plunging in purſuit of death.
But ere he gain the comfortleſs repoſe
He ſeeks, an acquieſcence of his ſoul

In heav'n-renouncing exile, he endures—
What does he not? from luſts oppos'd in vain,
And ſelf-reproaching conſcience. He foreſees
The fatal iſſue to his health, fame, peace,
Fortune and dignity; the loſs of all
That can ennoble man, and make frail life
Short as it is, ſupportable. Still worſe,
Far worſe than all the plagues with which his ſins
Infect his happieſt moments, he forebodes
Ages of hopeleſs miſery. Future death,
And death ſtill future. Not an haſty ſtroke
Like that which ſends him to the duſty grave,
But unrepealable enduring death.
Scripture is ſtill a trumpet to his fears;
What none can prove a forg'ry, may be true,
What none but bad men wiſh exploded, muſt.
That ſcruple checks him. Riot is not loud
Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midſt
Of laughter his compunctions are ſincere,
And he abhors the jeſt by which he ſhines.

Remorſe

Remorſe begets reform. His maſter-luſt
Falls firſt before his reſolute rebuke,
And ſeems dethroned and vanquiſh'd. Peace enſues,
But ſpurious and ſhort-liv'd, the puny child
Of ſelf-congratulating pride, begot
On fancied Innocence. Again he falls,
And fights again; but finds his beſt eſſay
A preſage ominous, portending ſtill
Its own diſhonor by a worſe relapſe.
Till Nature, unavailing Nature foiled
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,
Scoffs at her own performance. Reaſon now
Takes part with appetite, and pleads the cauſe,
Perverſely, which of late ſhe ſo condemn'd;
With ſhallow ſhifts and old devices, worn
And tatter'd in the ſervice of debauch,
Cov'ring his ſhame from his offended ſight.

" Hath God indeed giv'n appetites to man,
" And ſtored the earth ſo plenteouſly with means

" To gratify the hunger of his wiſh,
" And doth he reprobate and will he damn
" The uſe of his own bounty? making firſt
" So frail a kind, and then enacting laws
" So ſtrict, that leſs than perfect muſt deſpair?
" Falſehood! which whoſo but ſuſpects of truth,
" Diſhonors God, and makes a ſlave of man.
" Do they themſelves, who undertake for hire
" The teacher's office, and diſpenſe at large
" Their weekly dole of edifying ſtrains,
" Attend to their own muſic? have they faith
" In what with ſuch ſolemnity of tone
" And geſture they propound to our belief?
" Nay—conduct hath the loudeſt tongue. The voice
" Is but an inſtrument on which the prieſt
" May play what tune he pleaſes. In the deed,
" The unequivocal authentic deed
" We find ſound argument, we read the heart."

Such reas'nings (if that name muſt needs belong
T' excuſes in which reaſon has no part)

Serve

Serve to compoſe a ſpirit well inclined
To live on terms of amity with vice,
And ſin without diſturbance. Often urged
(As often as libidinous diſcourſe
Exhauſted, he reſorts to ſolemn themes
Of theological and grave import)
They gain at laſt his unreſerved aſſent.
Till harden'd his heart's temper in the forge
Of luſt, and on the anvil of deſpair,
He ſlights the ſtrokes of conſcience. Nothing moves,
Or nothing much, his conſtancy in ill;
Vain tampering has but foſter'd his diſeaſe,
'Tis deſp'rate, and he ſleeps the ſleep of death.
Haſte now, philoſopher, and ſet him free.
Charm the deaf ſerpent wiſely. Make him hear
Of rectitude and fitneſs; moral truth
How lovely, and the moral ſenſe how ſure,
Conſulted and obeyed, to guide his ſteps
Directly to the FIRST AND ONLY FAIR.
Spare not in ſuch a cauſe. Spend all the pow'rs

Of rant and rhapſody in virtue's praiſe,
Be moſt ſublimely good, verboſely grand,
And with poetic trappings grace thy proſe
Till it out-mantle all the pride of verſe.—
Ah, tinkling cymbal and high-ſounding braſs
Smitten in vain! ſuch muſic cannot charm
Th' eclipſe that intercepts truth's heav'nly beam,
And chills and darkens a wide-wand'ring ſoul.
The ſtill ſmall voice is wanted. He muſt ſpeak
Whoſe word leaps forth at once to its effect,
Who calls for things that are not, and they come.

Grace makes the ſlave a freeman. 'Tis a change
That turns to ridicule the turgid ſpeech
And ſtately tone of moraliſts, who boaſt,
As if like him of fabulous renown
They had indeed ability to ſmooth
The ſhag of ſavage nature, and were each
An Orpheus and omnipotent in ſong.
But transformation of apoſtate man

From

From fool to wiſe, from earthly to divine,
Is work for Him that made him. He alone,
And he by means in philoſophic eyes
Trivial and worthy of diſdain, atchieves
The wonder; humanizing what is brute
In the loſt kind, extracting from the lips
Of aſps their venom, overpow'ring ſtrength
By weakneſs, and hoſtility by love.

Patriots have toiled, and in their country's cauſe
Bled nobly, and their deeds, as they deſerve,
Receive proud recompenſe. We give in charge
Their names to the ſweet lyre. Th' hiſtoric muſe,
Proud of the treaſure, marches with it down
To lateſt times; and ſculpture, in her turn,
Gives bond in ſtone and ever-during braſs,
To guard them, and t' immortalize her truſt.
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To thoſe who poſted at the ſhrine of truth,
Have fall'n in her defence. A patriot's blood

Well

Well ſpent in ſuch a ſtrife may earn indeed,
And for a time inſure to his loved land
The ſweets of liberty and equal laws;
But martyrs ſtruggle for a brighter prize,
And win it with more pain. Their blood is ſhed
In confirmation of the nobleſt claim,
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To ſoar, and to anticipate the ſkies.
Yet few remember them. They lived unknown
Till perſecution dragg'd them into fame
And chaſed them up to heaven. Their aſhes flew
—No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and ſanctifies his ſong,
And Hiſtory, ſo warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates indeed
The tyranny that doom'd them to the fire,
But gives the glorious ſuff'rers little praiſe. *

* See Hume.

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are ſlaves beſide. There's not a chain
That helliſh foes confed'rate for his harm
Can wind around him, but he caſts it off
With as much eaſe as Samſon his green wyths.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and though poor perhaps, compared
With thoſe whoſe manſions glitter in his ſight,
Calls the delightful ſcen'ry all his own.
His are the mountains, and the vallies his,
And the reſplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who with filial confidence inſpired
Can lift to heav'n an unpreſumptuous eye,
And ſmiling ſay—my father made them all.
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphaſis of int'reſt his,
Whoſe eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whoſe heart with praiſe, and whoſe exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love

That plann'd, and built, and ſtill upholds a world
So cloath'd with beauty, for rebellious man?
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded ſoil, and ye may waſte much good
In ſenſeleſs riot; but ye will not find
In feaſt or in the chace, in ſong or dance
A liberty like his, who unimpeach'd
Of uſurpation and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his father's work,
And has a richer uſe of yours, than you.
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth
Of no mean city, plann'd or ere the hills
Were built, the fountains open'd, or the ſea
With all his roaring multitude of waves.
His freedom is the ſame in ev'ry ſtate,
And no condition of this changeful life
So manifold in cares, whoſe ev'ry day
Brings its own evil with it, makes it leſs.
For he has wings that neither ſickneſs, pain,
Nor penury, can cripple or confine,

No

No nook ſo narrow but he ſpreads them there
With eaſe, and is at large. Th' oppreſſor holds
His body bound, but knows not what a range
His ſpirit takes unconſcious of a chain,
And that to bind him is a vain attempt
Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells.

Acquaint thyſelf with God if thou would'ſt taſte
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou ſhalt perceive that thou waſt blind before;
Thine eye ſhall be inſtructed, and thine heart
Made pure, ſhall reliſh with divine delight
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.
Brutes graze the mountain-top with faces prone
And eyes intent upon the ſcanty herb
It yields them, or recumbent on its brow,
Ruminate heedleſs of the ſcene outſpread
Beneath, beyond, and ſtretching far away
From inland regions to the diſtant main.
Man views it and admires, but reſts content

With

With what he views. The landſcape has his praiſe,
But not its author. Unconcern'd who form'd
The paradiſe he ſees, he finds it ſuch,
And ſuch well-pleas'd to find it, aſks no more.
Not ſo the mind that has been touch'd from heav'n,
And in the ſchool of ſacred wiſdom taught
To read his wonders, in whoſe thought the world,
Fair as it is, exiſted ere it was.
Not for its own ſake merely, but for his
Much more who faſhioned it, he gives it praiſe;
Praiſe that from earth reſulting as it ought
To earth's acknowledg'd ſov'reign, finds at once
Its only juſt proprietor in Him.
The ſoul that ſees him, or receives ſublimed
New faculties, or learns at leaſt t' employ
More worthily the pow'rs ſhe own'd before;
Diſcerns in all things, what with ſtupid gaze
Of ignorance till then ſhe overlook'd,
A ray of heav'nly light gilding all forms
Terreſtrial, in the vaſt and the minute

The unambiguous footſteps of the God
Who gives its luſtre to an inſect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.
Much converſant with heav'n, ſhe often holds
With thoſe fair miniſters of light to man
That fill the ſkies nightly with ſilent pomp,
Sweet conference; enquires what ſtrains were they
With which heav'n rang, when ev'ry ſtar, in haſte
To gratulate the new-created earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the ſons of God
Shouted for joy.—" Tell me, ye ſhining hoſts
" That navigate a ſea that knows no ſtorms
" Beneath a vault unſullied with a cloud,
" If from your elevation, whence ye view
" Diſtinctly ſcenes inviſible to man,
" And ſyſtems of whoſe birth no tidings yet
" Have reach'd this nether world, ye ſpy a race
" Favor'd as our's, tranſgreſſors from the womb
" And haſting to a grave, yet doom'd to riſe,
" And to poſſeſs a brighter heav'n than yours?

" As

" As one who long detain'd on foreign ſhores
" Pants to return, and when he ſees afar
" His country's weather-bleach'd and batter'd rocks
" From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
" Radiant with joy towards the happy land;
" So I with animated hopes behold
" And many an aching wiſh, your beamy fires,
" That ſhew like beacons in the blue abyſs
" Ordain'd to guide th' embodied ſpirit home
" From toilſome life to never-ending reſt.
" Love kindles as I gaze. I feel deſires
" That give aſſurance of their own ſucceſs,
" And that infuſed from heav'n, muſt thither tend."

So reads he nature whom the lamp of truth
Illuminates. Thy lamp, myſterious word!
Which whoſo ſees, no longer wanders loſt
With intellects bemazed in endleſs doubt,
But runs the road of wiſdom. Thou haſt built
With means that were not till by thee employ'd,

Worlds

Worlds that had never been hadſt thou in ſtrength
Been leſs, or leſs benevolent than ſtrong.
They are thy witneſſes, who ſpeak thy pow'r
And goodneſs infinite, but ſpeak in ears
That hear not, or receive not their report.
In vain thy creatures teſtify of thee
'Till thou proclaim thyſelf. Theirs is indeed
A teaching voice; but 'tis the praiſe of thine
That whom it teaches it makes prompt to learn,
And with the boon gives talents for its uſe.
'Till thou art heard, imaginations vain
Poſſeſs the heart, and fables falſe as hell,
Yet deemed oracular, lure down to death
The uninform'd and heedleſs ſouls of men.
We give to chance, blind chance, ourſelves as blind,
The glory of thy work, which yet appears
Perfect and unimpeachable of blame,
Challenging human ſcrutiny, and proved
Then ſkilful moſt when moſt ſeverely judged.
But chance is not; or is not where thou reign'ſt:

Thy providence forbids that fickle pow'r
(If pow'r ſhe be that works but to confound)
To mix her wild vagaries with thy laws.
Yet thus we dote, refuſing while we can
Inſtruction, and inventing to ourſelves
Gods ſuch as guilt makes welcome, Gods that ſleep,
Or diſregard our follies, or that ſit
Amuſed ſpectators of this buſtling ſtage.
Thee we reject, unable to abide
Thy purity, 'till pure as thou art pure,
Made ſuch by thee, we love thee for that cauſe
For which we ſhunn'd and hated thee before.
Then we are free: then liberty like day
Breaks on the ſoul, and by a flaſh from heav'n
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not
'Till thou haſt touch'd them; 'tis the voice of ſong,
A loud Hoſanna ſent from all thy works,
Which he that hears it with a ſhout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the gen'ral praiſe.

In

In that bleſt moment, nature throwing wide
Her veil opaque, diſcloſes with a ſmile
The author of her beauties, who retired
Behind his own creation, works unſeen
By the impure, and hears his pow'r denied.
Thou art the ſource and centre of all minds,
Their only point of reſt, eternal word!
From thee departing, they are loſt and rove
At random, without honor, hope, or peace.
From thee is all that ſooths the life of man,
His high endeavour, and his glad ſucceſs,
His ſtrength to ſuffer, and his will to ſerve.
But oh thou bounteous giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyſelf the crown!
Give what thou canſt, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.

THE

TASK.

BOOK VI.

ARGUMENT of the SIXTH BOOK.

Bells at a diſtance.—Their effect.—A fine noon in winter.—A ſheltered walk.—Meditation better than books.—Our familiarity with the courſe of nature makes it appear leſs wonderful than it is.—The transformation that ſpring effects in a ſhrubbery deſcribed.—A miſtake concerning the courſe of nature corrected.—God maintains it by an unremitted act.—The amuſements faſhionable at this hour of the day reproved.—Animals happy, a delightful ſight.—Origin of cruelty to animals.—That it is a great crime proved from ſcripture.—That proof illuſtrated by a tale.—A line drawn between the lawful and the unlawful deſtruction of them.—Their good and uſeful properties inſiſted on.—Apology for the encomiums beſtowed by the author on animals.—Inſtances of man's extravagant praiſe of man.—The groans of the creation ſhall have an end.—A view taken of the reſtoration of all things.—An Invocation and an Invitation of him who ſhall bring it to paſs.—The retired man vindicated from the charge of uſeleſſneſs.—Concluſion.

THE TASK.

THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

THERE is in ſouls a ſympathy with ſounds,
And as the mind is pitch'd the ear is pleas'd
With melting airs or martial, briſk or grave.
Some chord in uniſon with what we hear
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.
How ſoft the muſic of thoſe village bells
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence ſweet! now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again and louder ſtill,
Clear and ſonorous as the gale comes on.
With eaſy force it opens all the cells

Where mem'ry ſlept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the ſcene recurs,
And with it all its pleaſures and its pains.
Such comprehenſive views the ſpirit takes,
That in a few ſhort moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his courſe)
The windings of my way through many years.
Short as in retroſpect the journey ſeems,
It ſeem'd not always ſhort; the rugged path
And proſpect oft ſo dreary and forlorn
Moved many a ſigh at its diſheart'ning length.
Yet feeling preſent evils, while the paſt
Faintly impreſs the mind, or not at all,
How readily we wiſh time ſpent revoked,
That we might try the ground again, where once
(Through inexperience as we now perceive)
We miſs'd that happineſs we might have found.
Some friend is gone, perhaps his ſon's beſt friend
A father, whoſe authority, in ſhow

When

When moſt ſevere, and muſt'ring all its force,
Was but the graver countenance of love.
Whoſe favour, like the clouds of ſpring, might low'r,
And utter now and then an awful voice,
But had a bleſſing in its darkeſt frown,
Threat'ning at once and nouriſhing the plant.
We loved, but not enough the gentle hand
That reared us. At a thoughtleſs age allured
By ev'ry gilded folly, we renounced
His ſhelt'ring ſide, and wilfully forewent
That converſe which we now in vain regret.
How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected ſire! a mother too,
That ſofter friend, perhaps more gladly ſtill,
Might he demand them at the gates of death.
Sorrow has ſince they went ſubdued and tamed
The playful humour, he could now endure,
(Himſelf grown ſober in the vale of tears)
And feel a parent's preſence no reſtraint.
But not to underſtand a treaſure's worth

'Till

'Till time has ſtol'n away the ſlighted good,
Is cauſe of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderneſs it is.
The few that pray at all pray oft amiſs,
And ſeeking grace t' improve the prize they hold
Would urge a wiſer ſuit, than aſking more.

The night was winter in his rougheſt mood,
The morning ſharp and clear. But now at noon
Upon the ſouthern ſide of the ſlant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blaſt,
The ſeaſon ſmiles, reſigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a ſpeck
The dazzling ſplendour of the ſcene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale,
And through the trees I view th' embattled tow'r
Whence all the muſic. I again perceive
The ſoothing influence of the wafted ſtrains,
And ſettle in ſoft muſings as I tread

The walk ſtill verdant under oaks and elms,
Whoſe outſpread branches overarch the glade.
The roof though moveable through all its length
As the wind ſways it, has yet well ſufficed,
And intercepting in their ſilent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noiſe is here, or none that hinders thought.
The red-breaſt warbles ſtill, but is content
With ſlender notes and more than half ſuppreſs'd.
Pleaſed with his ſolitude, and flitting light
From ſpray to ſpray, where'er he reſts he ſhakes
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.
Stillneſs accompanied with ſounds ſo ſoft
Charms more than ſilence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give an uſeful leſſon to the head,
And learning wiſer grow without his books.
Knowledge and wiſdom, far from being one,
Have oftimes no connexion. Knowledge dwells

In heads replete with thoughts of other men,
Wiſdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable maſs,
The mere materials with which wiſdom builds,
'Till ſmooth'd and ſquared and fitted to its place,
Does but incumber whom it ſeems t' enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd ſo much,
Wiſdom is humble that he knows no more.
Books are not ſeldom taliſmans and ſpells
By which the magic art of ſhrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthrall'd.
Some to the faſcination of a name
Surrender judgment hood-wink'd. Some the ſtile
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error, leads them by a tune entranced.
While ſloth ſeduces more, too weak to bear
The inſupportable fatigue of thought,
And ſwallowing therefore without pauſe or choice
The total griſt unſifted, huſks and all.
But trees, and rivulets whoſe rapid courſe

Defies

Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,
And ſheep-walks populous with bleating lambs,
And lanes in which the primroſe ere her time
Peeps through the moſs that cloaths the hawthorn root,
Deceive no ſtudent. Wiſdom there, and truth,
Not ſhy as in the world, and to be won
By ſlow ſolicitation, ſeize at once
The roving thought, and fix it on themſelves.

What prodigies can pow'r divine perform
More grand, than it produces year by year,
And all in ſight of inattentive man?
Familiar with th' effect we ſlight the cauſe,
And in the conſtancy of nature's courſe,
The regular return of genial months,
And renovation of a faded world,
See nought to wonder at. Should God again,
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race
Of the undeviating and punctual ſun,
How would the world admire! but ſpeaks it leſs

An

An agency divine, to make him know
His moment when to ſink and when to riſe
Age after age, than to arreſt his courſe?
All we behold is miracle, but ſeen
So duly, all is miracle in vain.
Where now the vital energy that moved,
While ſummer was, the pure and ſubtle lymph
Through th' imperceptible mæand'ring veins
Of leaf and flow'r? It ſleeps; and the icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impreſs'd
A cold ſtagnation on th' inteſtine tide.
But let the months go round, a few ſhort months,
And all ſhall be reſtored. Theſe naked ſhoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry muſic, ſighing as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aſpiring and with ampler ſpread
Shall boaſt new charms, and more than they have loſt.
Then, each in its peculiar honors clad,
Shall publiſh even to the diſtant eye

Its family and tribe. Laburnum rich
In ſtreaming gold; ſyringa iv'ry pure;
The ſcented and the ſcentleſs roſe; this red
And of an humbler growth, the * other tall,
And throwing up into the darkeſt gloom
Of neighb'ring cypreſs or more ſable yew
Her ſilver globes, light as the foamy ſurf
That the wind ſevers from the broken wave.
The lilac various in array, now white,
Now ſanguine, and her beauteous head now ſet
With purple ſpikes pyramidial, as if
Studious of ornament, yet unreſolved
Which hue ſhe moſt approved, ſhe choſe them all.
Copious of flow'rs the woodbine, pale and wan,
But well compenſating their ſickly looks
With never-cloying odours, early and late.
Hypericum all bloom, ſo thick a ſwarm
Of flow'rs like flies cloathing her ſlender rods
That ſcarce a leaf appears. Mezerion too,
Though leafleſs, well attired, and thick beſet

With

* The Guelder-roſe.

With bluſhing wreaths inveſting ev'ry ſpray.
Althæa with the purple eye, the broom,
Yellow and bright as bullion unalloy'd
Her bloſſoms, and luxuriant above all
The jaſmine, throwing wide her elegant ſweets,
The deep dark green of whoſe unvarniſh'd leaf
Makes more conſpicuous, and illumines more
The bright profuſion of her ſcatter'd ſtars.—
Theſe have been, and theſe ſhall be in their day,
And all this uniform uncoloured ſcene
Shall be diſmantled of its fleecy load,
And fluſh into variety again.
From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,
Is Nature's progreſs when ſhe lectures man
In heav'nly truth; evincing as ſhe makes
The grand tranſition, that there lives and works
A ſoul in all things, and that ſoul is God.
The beauties of the wilderneſs are his,
That make ſo gay the ſolitary place
Where no eye ſees them. And the fairer forms

That

That cultivation glories in, are his.
He ſets the bright proceſſion on its way,
And marſhals all the order of the year.
He marks the bounds which winter may not paſs,
And blunts his pointed fury. In its caſe
Ruſſet and rude, folds up the tender germ
Uninjured, with inimitable art,
And ere one flow'ry ſeaſon fades and dies
Deſigns the blooming wonders of the next.

Some ſay that in the origin of things,
When all creation ſtarted into birth,
The infant elements received a law
From which they ſwerve not ſince. That under force
Of that controuling ordinance they move,
And need not his immediate hand, who firſt
Preſcribed their courſe, to regulate it now.
Thus dream they, and contrive to ſave a God
The incumbrance of his own concerns, and ſpare
The great Artificer of all that moves

The ſtreſs of a continual act, the pain
Of unremitted vigilance and care,
As too laborious and ſevere a taſk.
So man the moth, is not afraid it ſeems
To ſpan Omnipotence, and meaſure might
That knows no meaſure, by the ſcanty rule
And ſtandard of his own, that is to day,
And is not, ere to-morrow's ſun go down.
But how ſhould matter occupy a charge
Dull as it is, and ſatisfy a law
So vaſt in its demands, unleſs impell'd
To ceaſeleſs ſervice by a ceaſeleſs force,
And under preſſure of ſome conſcious cauſe?
The Lord of all, himſelf through all diffuſed,
Suſtains and is the life of all that lives.
Nature is but a name for an effect
Whoſe cauſe is God. He feeds the ſecret fire
By which the mighty proceſs is maintain'd,
Who ſleeps not, is not weary; in whoſe ſight
Slow-circling ages are as tranſient days;

Whoſe work is without labor, whoſe deſigns
No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts,
And whoſe beneficence no charge exhauſts.
Him blind antiquity profaned, not ſerv'd,
With ſelf-taught rites and under various names
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
And Flora and Vertumnus; peopling earth
With tutelary goddeſſes and gods
That were not, and commending as they would
To each ſome province, garden, field, or grove.
But all are under one. One ſpirit—His
Who bore the platted thorns with bleeding brows,
Rules univerſal nature. Not a flow'r
But ſhows ſome touch in freckle, ſtreak or ſtain,
Of his unrivall'd pencil. He inſpires
Their balmy odors and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes
In grains as countleſs as the ſea-ſide ſands,
The forms with which he ſprinkles all the earth.
Happy who walks with him! whom what he finds

Of flavour or of ſcent in fruit or flow'r,
Or what he views of beautiful or grand
In Nature, from the broad majeſtic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the ſun,
Prompts with remembrance of a preſent God.
His preſence who made all ſo fair, perceived,
Makes all ſtill fairer. As with him no ſcene
Is dreary, ſo with him all ſeaſons pleaſe.
Though winter had been none, had man been true,
And earth be puniſhed for its tenant's ſake,
Yet not in vengeance; as this ſmiling ſky
So ſoon ſucceeding ſuch an angry night,
And theſe diſſolving ſnows, and this clear ſtream
Recov'ring faſt its liquid muſic, prove.

Who then that has a mind well ſtrung and tuned
To contemplation, and within his reach
A ſcene ſo friendly to his fav'rite taſk,
Would waſte attention at the chequer'd board,
His hoſt of wooden warriors to and fro

Marching and counter-marching, with an eye
As fixt as marble, with a forehead ridged
And furrow'd into ſtorms, and with a hand
Trembling, as if eternity were hung
In balance on his conduct of a pin?
Nor envies he aught more their idle ſport
Who pant with application miſapplied
To trivial toys, and puſhing iv'ry balls
Acroſs the velvet level, feel a joy
Akin to rapture, when the bawble finds
Its deſtin'd goal of difficult acceſs.
Nor deems he wiſer him, who gives his noon
To Miſs, the Mercer's plague, from ſhop to ſhop
Wand'ring, and litt'ring with unfolded ſilks
The poliſhed counter, and approving none,
Or promiſing with ſmiles to call again.
Nor him, who by his vanity ſeduced
And ſooth'd into a dream that he diſcerns
The difference of a Guido from a daub,
Frequents the crowded auction. Station'd there

As duly as the Langford of the ſhow,
With glaſs at eye, and catalogue in hand,
And tongue accompliſh'd in the fulſome cant
And pedantry that coxcombs learn with eaſe,
Oft as the price-deciding hammer falls
He notes it in his book, then raps his box,
Swears 'tis a bargain, rails at his hard fate
That he has let it paſs—but never bids.

Here unmoleſted, through whatever ſign
The ſun proceeds, I wander. Neither miſt,
Nor freezing ſky, nor ſultry, checking me,
Nor ſtranger intermeddling with my joy.
Ev'n in the ſpring and play-time of the year
That calls the unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones, a ſportive train,
To gather king-cups in the yellow mead,
And prink their hair with daiſies, or to pick
A cheap but wholeſome ſallad from the brook,
Theſe ſhades are all my own. The tim'rous hare,

Grown ſo familiar with her frequent gueſt,
Scarce ſhuns me; and the ſtock-dove unalarm'd
Sits cooing in the pine-tree, nor ſuſpends
His long love-ditty for my near approach.
Drawn from his refuge in ſome lonely elm
That age or injury has hollow'd deep,
Where on his bed of wool and matted leaves
He has outſlept the winter, ventures forth
To friſk a while, and baſk in the warm ſun,
The ſquirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play.
He ſees me, and at once, ſwift as a bird,
Aſcends the neighb'ring beech; there whiſks his bruſh
And perks his ears, and ſtamps and ſcolds aloud,
With all the prettineſs of feign'd alarm,
And anger inſignificantly fierce.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowſhip, as being void
Of ſympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendſhip both, that is not pleaſed

With ſight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happineſs augment his own.
The bounding fawn that darts acroſs the glade
When none purſues, through mere delight of heart,
And ſpirits buoyant with exceſs of glee;
The horſe, as wanton and almoſt as fleet,
That ſkims the ſpacious meadow at full ſpeed,
Then ſtops and ſnorts, and throwing high his heels
Starts to the voluntary race again;
The very kine that gambol at high noon,
The total herd receiving firſt from one
That leads the dance, a ſummons to be gay,
Though wild their ſtrange vagaries, and uncouth
Their efforts, yet reſolved with one conſent
To give ſuch act and utt'rance as they may
To extaſy too big to be ſuppreſſed—
Theſe, and a thouſand images of bliſs,
With which kind nature graces ev'ry ſcene
Where cruel man defeats not her deſign,
Impart to the benevolent, who wiſh

All

All that are capable of pleaſure, pleaſed,
A far ſuperior happineſs to theirs,
The comfort of a reaſonable joy.

Man ſcarce had ris'n, obedient to his call
Who form'd him, from the duſt his future grave,
When he was crown'd as never king was ſince.
God ſet the diadem upon his head,
And angel choirs attended. Wond'ring ſtood
The new-made monarch, while before him paſs'd,
All happy and all perfect in their kind,
The creatures, ſummon'd from their various haunts
To ſee their ſov'reign, and confeſs his ſway.
Vaſt was his empire, abſolute his pow'r,
Or bounded only by a law whoſe force
'Twas his ſublimeſt privilege to feel
And own, the law of univerſal love.
He ruled with meekneſs, they obeyed with joy.
No cruel purpoſe lurk'd within his heart,
And no diſtruſt of his intent in theirs.

So

So Eden was a ſcene of harmleſs ſport,
Where kindneſs on his part who ruled the whole
Begat a tranquil confidence in all,
And fear as yet was not, nor cauſe for fear.
But ſin marr'd all; and the revolt of man,
That ſource of evils not exhauſted yet,
Was puniſh'd with revolt of his from him.
Garden of God, how terrible the change
Thy groves and lawns then witneſs'd! ev'ry heart,
Each animal of ev'ry name, conceived
A jealouſy and an inſtinctive fear,
And conſcious of ſome danger, either fled
Precipitate the loath'd abode of man,
Or growl'd defiance in ſuch angry ſort,
As taught him too to tremble in his turn.
Thus harmony and family accord
Were driv'n from Paradiſe; and in that hour
The ſeeds of cruelty that ſince have ſwell'd
To ſuch gigantic and enormous growth,
Were ſown in human nature's fruitful ſoil.

Hence

Hence date the perſecution and the pain
That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,
Regardleſs of their plaints. To make him ſport,
To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,
Or his baſe gluttony, are cauſes good
And juſt in his account, why bird and beaſt
Should ſuffer torture, and the ſtreams be dyed
With blood of their inhabitants impaled.
Earth groans beneath the burthen of a war
Waged with defenceleſs innocence, while he,
Not ſatisfied to prey on all around,
Adds tenfold bitterneſs to death, by pangs
Needleſs, and firſt torments ere he devours.
Now happieſt they that occupy the ſcenes
The moſt remote from his abhorr'd reſort,
Whom once as delegate of God on earth
They fear'd, and as his perfect image loved.
The wilderneſs is theirs with all its caves,
Its hollow glens, its thickets, and its plains
Unviſited by man. There they are free,

And howl and roar as likes them, uncontroul'd,
Nor aſk his leave to ſlumber or to play.
Woe to the tyrant if he dare intrude
Within the confines of their wild domain;
The lion tells him—I am monarch here—
And if he ſpares him, ſpares him on the terms
Of royal mercy, and through gen'rous ſcorn
To rend a victim trembling at his foot.
In meaſure as by force of inſtinct drawn,
Or by neceſſity conſtrain'd, they live
Dependent upon man, thoſe in his fields,
Theſe at his crib, and ſome beneath his roof;
They prove too often at how dear a rate
He ſells protection. Witneſs, at his foot
The ſpaniel dying for ſome venial fault,
Under diſſection of the knotted ſcourge.
Witneſs, the patient ox, with ſtripes and yells
Driv'n to the ſlaughter, goaded as he runs
To madneſs, while the ſavage at his heels
Laughs at the frantic ſuff'rer's fury ſpent

Upon

Upon the guiltleſs paſſenger o'erthrown.
He too is witneſs, nobleſt of the train
That wait on man, the flight-performing horſe:
With unſuſpecting readineſs he takes
His murth'rer on his back, and puſh'd all day
With bleeding ſides and flanks that heave for life
To the far-diſtant goal, arrives and dies.
So little mercy ſhows who needs ſo much!
Does law, ſo jealous in the cauſe of man,
Denounce no doom on the delinquent? None.
He lives, and o'er his brimming beaker boaſts
(As if barbarity were high deſert)
Th' inglorious feat, and clamorous in praiſe
Of the poor brute, ſeems wiſely to ſuppoſe
The honors of his matchleſs horſe his own.
But many a crime, deem'd innocent on earth,
Is regiſter'd in heav'n, and theſe no doubt,
Have each their record, with a curſe annext.
Man may diſmiſs compaſſion from his heart,
But God will never. When he charg'd the Jew

T' aſſiſt

T' aſſiſt his foe's down-fallen beaſt to riſe,
And when the buſh-exploring boy that ſeized
The young, to let the parent bird go free,
Proved he not plainly that his meaner works
Are yet his care, and have an intereſt all,
All, in the univerſal Father's love.
On Noah, and in him on all mankind
The charter was conferr'd by which we hold
The fleſh of animals in fee, and claim
O'er all we feed on, pow'r of life and death.
But read the inſtrument, and mark it well.
Th' oppreſſion of a tyrannous controul
Can find no warrant there. Feed then, and yield
Thanks for thy food. Carnivorous through ſin
Feed on the ſlain, but ſpare the living brute.

The Governor of all, himſelf to all
So bountiful, in whoſe attentive ear
The unfledged raven and the lion's whelp
Plead not in vain for pity on the pangs

Of

Of hunger unaſſuaged, has interpoſed,
Not ſeldom, his avenging arm, to ſmite
Th' injurious trampler upon nature's law
That claims forbearance even for a brute.
He hates the hardneſs of a Balaam's heart;
And prophet as he was, he might not ſtrike
The blameleſs animal, without rebuke,
On which he rode. Her opportune offence
Saved him, or th' unrelenting ſeer had died.
He ſees that human equity is ſlack
To interfere, though in ſo juſt a cauſe,
And makes the taſk his own. Inſpiring dumb
And helpleſs victims with a ſenſe ſo keen
Of injury, with ſuch knowledge of their ſtrength,
And ſuch ſagacity to take revenge,
That oft the beaſt has ſeem'd to judge the man.
An ancient, not a legendary tale,
By one of ſound intelligence rehears'd
(If ſuch, who plead for Providence, may ſeem
In modern eyes) ſhall make the doctrine clear.

Where England ſtretch'd towards the ſetting ſun
Narrow and long, o'erlooks the weſtern wave,
Dwelt young Miſagathus. A ſcorner he
Of God and goodneſs, atheiſt in oſtent,
Vicious in act, in temper ſavage-fierce.
He journey'd, and his chance was as he went,
To join a trav'ller of far diff'rent note,
Evander, fam'd for piety, for years
Deſerving honor, but for wiſdom more.
Fame had not left the venerable man
A ſtranger to the manners of the youth,
Whoſe face too was familiar to his view.
Their way was on the margin of the land,
O'er the green ſummit of the rocks whoſe baſe
Beats back the roaring ſurge, ſcarce heard ſo high.
The charity that warm'd his heart was moved
At ſight of the man-monſter. With a ſmile
Gentle, and affable, and full of grace,
As fearful of offending whom he wiſh'd
Much to perſuade, he plied his ear with truths

Not harſhly thunder'd forth or rudely preſs'd,
But like his purpoſe, gracious, kind, and ſweet.
And doſt thou dream, th' impenetrable man
Exclaim'd, that me, the lullabies of age
And fantaſies of dotards ſuch as thou
Can cheat, or move a moment's fear in me?
Mark now the proof I give thee, that the brave
Need no ſuch aids as ſuperſtition lends
To ſteel their hearts againſt the dread of death.
He ſpoke, and to the precipice at hand
Puſh'd with a madman's fury. Fancy ſhrinks,
And the blood thrills and curdles at the thought
Of ſuch a gulph as he deſign'd his grave.
But though the felon on his back could dare
The dreadful leap, more rational his ſteed
Declined the death, and wheeling ſwiftly round
Or ere his hoof had preſs'd the crumbling verge,
Baffled his rider, ſaved againſt his will.
The frenzy of the brain may be redreſs'd
By med'cine well applied, but without grace

The heart's inſanity admits no cure.
Enrag'd the more by what might have reform'd
His horrible intent, again he ſought
Deſtruction with a zeal to be deſtroyed,
With ſounding whip and rowels dyed in blood.
But ſtill in vain. The providence that meant
A longer date to the far nobler beaſt,
Spared yet again th' ignobler for his ſake.
And now, his proweſs proved, and his ſincere
Incurable obduracy evinced,
His rage grew cool; and pleaſed perhaps t' have earn'
So cheaply the renown of that attempt,
With looks of ſome complacence he reſumed
His road, deriding much the blank amaze
Of good Evander, ſtill where he was left
Fixt motionleſs, and petrified with dread.
So on they fared; diſcourſe on other themes
Enſuing, ſeem'd to obliterate the paſt,
And tamer far for ſo much fury ſhown,
(As is the courſe of raſh and fiery men)

The

The rude companion ſmiled as if transform'd.
But 'twas a tranſient calm. A ſtorm was near,
An unſuſpected ſtorm. His hour was come.
The impious challenger of pow'r divine
Was now to learn, that heav'n though ſlow to wrath,
Is never with impunity defied.
His horſe, as he had caught his maſter's mood,
Snorting, and ſtarting into ſudden rage,
Unbidden, and not now to be controul'd,
Ruſh'd to the cliff, and having reach'd it, ſtood.
At once the ſhock unſeated him. He flew
Sheer o'er the craggy barrier, and immerſed
Deep in the flood, found, when he ſought it not,
The death he had deſerved, and died alone.
So God wrought double juſtice; made the fool
The victim of his own tremendous choice,
And taught a brute the way to ſafe revenge.

I would not enter on my liſt of friends
(Though grac'd with poliſh'd manners and fine ſenſe

Yet wanting ſenſibility) the man
Who needleſsly ſets foot upon a worm.
An inadvertent ſtep may cruſh the ſnail
That crawls at evening in the public path,
But he that has humanity, forewarned,
Will tread aſide, and let the reptile live.
The creeping vermin, loathſome to the ſight,
And charged perhaps with venom, that intrudes
A viſitor unwelcome into ſcenes
Sacred to neatneſs and repoſe, th' alcove,
The chamber, or refectory, may die.
A neceſſary act incurs no blame.
Not ſo when held within their proper bounds
And guiltleſs of offence, they range the air,
Or take their paſtime in the ſpacious field.
There they are privileged. And he that hunts
Or harms them there, is guilty of a wrong,
Diſturbs th' œconomy of nature's realm,
Who when ſhe form'd, deſign'd them an abode.
The ſum is this: if man's convenience, health,

Or

Or ſafety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and muſt extinguiſh theirs.
Elſe they are all—the meaneſt things that are,
As free to live and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the firſt,
Who in his ſov'reign wiſdom made them all.
Ye therefore who love mercy, teach your ſons
To love it too. The ſpring-time of our years
Is ſoon diſhonour'd and defiled in moſt
By budding ills, that aſk a prudent hand
To check them. But alas! none ſooner ſhoots,
If unreſtrain'd, into luxuriant growth,
Than cruelty, moſt dev'liſh of them all.
Mercy to him that ſhows it, is the rule
And righteous limitation of its act
By which heav'n moves in pard'ning guilty man;
And he that ſhows none, being ripe in years,
And conſcious of the outrage he commits,
Shall ſeek it, and not find it in his turn.

Diſtinguiſh'd much by reaſon, and ſtill more
By our capacity of grace divine,
From creatures that exiſt but for our ſake,
Which having ſerved us, periſh, we are held
Accountable, and God, ſome future day,
Will reckon with us roundly for th' abuſe
Of what he deems no mean or trivial truſt.
Superior as we are, they yet depend
Not more on human help, than we on theirs.
Their ſtrength, or ſpeed, or vigilance, were giv'n
In aid of our defects. In ſome are found
Such teachable and apprehenſive parts,
That man's attainments in his own concerns,
Match'd with th' expertneſs of the brutes in theirs,
Are oft-times vanquiſh'd and thrown far behind.
Some ſhow that nice ſagacity of ſmell,
And read with ſuch diſcernment, in the port
And figure of the man, his ſecret aim,
That oft we owe our ſafety to a ſkill
We could not teach, and muſt deſpair to learn.

But

But learn we might, if not too proud to ſtoop
To quadrupede inſtructors, many a good
And uſeful quality, and virtue too,
Rarely exemplified among ourſelves.
Attachment never to be wean'd, or changed
By any change of fortune, proof alike
Againſt unkindneſs, abſence, and neglect;
Fidelity, that neither bribe nor threat
Can move or warp, and gratitude for ſmall
And trivial favors, laſting as the life,
And gliſt'ning even in the dying eye.

Man praiſes man. Deſert in arts or arms
Wins public honor; and ten thouſand ſit
Patiently preſent at a ſacred ſong,
Commemoration-mad; content to hear
(Oh wonderful effect of muſic's pow'r!)
Meſſiah's eulogy, for Handel's ſake.
But leſs, methinks, than ſacrilege might ſerve—
(For was it leſs? What heathen would have dared

To ſtrip Jove's ſtatue of his oaken wreath
And hang it up in honor of a man?)
Much leſs might ſerve, when all that we deſign
Is but to gratify an itching ear,
And give the day to a muſician's praiſe.
Remember Handel! who that was not born
Deaf as the dead to harmony, forgets,
Or can, the more than Homer of his age?
Yes—we remember him. And while we praiſe
A talent ſo divine, remember too
That His moſt holy book from whom it came
Was never meant, was never uſed before
To buckram out the mem'ry of a man.
But huſh!—the muſe perhaps is too ſevere,
And with a gravity beyond the ſize
And meaſure of th' offence, rebukes a deed
Leſs impious than abſurd, and owing more
To want of judgment than to wrong deſign.
So in the chapel of old Ely Houſe,
When wand'ring Charles, who meant to be the third,

Had

Had fled from William, and the news was freſh,
The ſimple clerk but loyal, did announce,
And eke did rear right merrily, two ſtaves,
Sung to the praiſe and glory of King George.
—Man praiſes man, and Garrick's mem'ry next,
When time hath ſomewhat mellow'd it, and made
The idol of our worſhip while he lived,
The God of our idolatry once more,
Shall have its altar; and the world ſhall go
In pilgrimage to bow before his ſhrine.
The theatre too ſmall, ſhall ſuffocate
Its ſqueezed contents, and more than it admits
Shall ſigh at their excluſion, and return
Ungratified. For there ſome noble lord
Shall ſtuff his ſhoulders with king Richard's bunch,
Or wrap himſelf in Hamlet's inky cloak,
And ſtrut, and ſtorm and ſtraddle, ſtamp and ſtare,
To ſhow the world how Garrick did not act.
For Garrick was a worſhipper himſelf;
He drew the Liturgy, and framed the rites

And ſolemn ceremonial of the day,
And call'd the world to worſhip on the banks
Of Avon famed in ſong. Ah! pleaſant proof
That piety has ſtill in human hearts
Some place, a ſpark or two not yet extinct.
The mulb'ry tree was hung with blooming wreaths,
The mulb'ry tree ſtood center of the dance,
The mulb'ry tree was hymn'd with dulcet airs,
And from his touchwood trunk, the mulb'ry tree
Supplied ſuch relics, as devotion holds
Still ſacred, and preſerves with pious care.
So 'twas an hallow'd time. Decorum reign'd,
And mirth without offence. No few return'd
Doubtleſs much edified, and all refreſhed.
—Man praiſes man. The rabble all alive,
From tipling-benches, cellars, ſtalls, and ſtyes,
Swarm in the ſtreets. The ſtateſman of the day,
A pompous and ſlow-moving pageant comes.
Some ſhout him, and ſome hang upon his car
To gaze in's eyes and bleſs him. Maidens wave

Their 'kerchiefs, and old women weep for joy.
While others not ſo ſatisfied unhorſe
The gilded equipage, and turning looſe
His ſteeds, uſurp a place they well deſerve.
Why? what has charm'd them? Hath he ſaved the ſtate?
No. Doth he purpoſe its ſalvation? No.
Inchanting novelty, that moon at full,
That finds out ev'ry crevice of the head
That is not ſound and perfect, hath in theirs
Wrought this diſturbance. But the wane is near,
And his own cattle muſt ſuffice him ſoon.
Thus idly do we waſte the breath of praiſe,
And dedicate a tribute, in its uſe
And juſt direction ſacred, to a thing
Doomed to the duſt, or lodged already there.
Encomium in old time was poets' work.
But poets having laviſhly long ſince
Exhauſted all materials of the art,
The taſk now falls into the public hand.
And I, contented with an humble theme,

Have

Have poured my ſtream of panegyric down
The vale of nature, where it creeps and winds
Among her lovely works, with a ſecure
And unambitious courſe, reflecting clear
If not the virtues yet the worth of brutes.
And I am recompenſed, and deem the toils
Of poetry not loſt, if verſe of mine
May ſtand between an animal and woe,
And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.

The groans of nature in this nether world,
Which heav'n has heard for ages, have an end.
Foretold by prophets, and by poets ſung
Whoſe fire was kindled at the prophets' lamp,
The time of reſt, the promiſed ſabbath comes.
Six thouſand years of ſorrow have well-nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and diſaſtrous courſe
Over a ſinful world. And what remains
Of this tempeſtuous ſtate of human things,
Is merely as the working of a ſea

Before

Before a calm, that rocks itſelf to reſt.
For he whoſe car the winds are, and the clouds
The duſt that waits upon his ſultry march
When ſin hath moved him, and his wrath is hot,
Shall viſit earth in mercy; ſhall deſcend
Propitious, in his chariot paved with love,
And what his ſtorms have blaſted and defaced
For man's revolt, ſhall with a ſmile repair.

Sweet is the harp of prophecy. Too ſweet
Not to be wrong'd by a mere mortal touch;
Nor can the wonders it records, be ſung
To meaner muſic, and not ſuffer loſs.
But when a poet, or when one like me,
Happy to rove among poetic flow'rs
Though poor in ſkill to rear them, lights at laſt
On ſome fair theme, ſome theme divinely fair,
Such is the impulſe and the ſpur he feels
To give it praiſe proportioned to its worth,

That

That not t' attempt it, arduous as he deems
The labor, were a taſk more arduous ſtill.

Oh ſcenes ſurpaſſing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accompliſh'd bliſs! which who can ſee
Though but in diſtant proſpect, and not feel
His ſoul refreſh'd with foretaſte of the joy?
Rivers of gladneſs water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty; the reproach
Of barrenneſs is paſt. The fruitful field
Laughs with abundance, and the land once lean,
Or fertile only in its own diſgrace,
Exults to ſee its thiſtly curſe repealed.
The various ſeaſons woven into one,
And that one ſeaſon an eternal ſpring,
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence
For there is none to covet, all are full.
The lion and the libbard and the bear
Graze with the fearleſs flocks. All baſk at noon
Together, or all gambol in the ſhade

Of the ſame grove, and drink one common ſtream.
Antipathies are none. No foe to man
Lurks in the ſerpent now. The mother ſees
And ſmiles to ſee her infant's playful hand
Stretch'd forth to dally with the creſted worm,
To ſtroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
All creatures worſhip man, and all mankind
One Lord, one Father. Error has no place;
That creeping peſtilence is driv'n away,
The breath of heav'n has chaſed it. In the heart
No paſſion touches a diſcordant ſtring,
But all is harmony and love. Diſeaſe
Is not. The pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due courſe, nor fears the froſt of age.
One ſong employs all nations, and all cry
"Worthy the Lamb, for he was ſlain for us."
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From diſtant mountains catch the flying joy,

'Till

'Till nation after nation taught the ſtrain,
Each rolls the rapturous Hoſanna round.
Behold the meaſure of the promiſe filled,
See Salem built, the labour of a God!
Bright as a ſun the ſacred city ſhines;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her, unbounded is her joy
And endleſs her encreaſe. Thy rams are there
* Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
And Saba's ſpicy groves pay tribute there.
Praiſe is in all her gates. Upon her walls,
And in her ſtreets, and in her ſpacious courts
Is heard ſalvation. Eaſtern Java there
Kneels with the native of the fartheſt Weſt,

* Nebaioth and Kedar, the ſons of Iſhmael and progenitors of the Arabs, in the prophetic ſcripture here alluded to, may be reaſonably conſidered as repreſentatives of the Gentiles at large.

And

And Æthiopia ſpreads abroad the hand
And worſhips. Her report has travell'd forth
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To ſee thy beauty and to ſhare thy joy
O Sion! an aſſembly ſuch as earth
Saw never, ſuch as heav'n ſtoops down to ſee.

Thus heav'n-ward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all muſt be at length reſtored.
So God has greatly purpoſed; who would elſe
In his diſhonored works himſelf endure
Diſhonor, and be wrong'd without redreſs.
Haſte then, and wheel away a ſhatter'd world,
Ye ſlow-revolving ſeaſons! We would ſee,
(A ſight to which our eyes are ſtrangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate his laws,
And ſuffer for its crime: would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good,
How pleaſant in itſelf what pleaſes him.
Here ev'ry drop of honey hides a ſting,
Worms wind themſelves into our ſweeteſt flow'rs,

And ev'n the joy that haply ſome poor heart
Derives from heav'n, pure as the fountain is,
Is ſullied in the ſtream; taking a taint
From touch of human lips, at beſt impure.
Oh for a world in principle as chaſte
As this is groſs and ſelfiſh! over which
Cuſtom and prejudice ſhall bear no ſway
That govern all things here, ſhould'ring aſide
The meek and modeſt truth, and forcing her
To ſeek a refuge from the tongue of ſtrife
In nooks obſcure, far from the ways of men.
Where violence ſhall never lift the ſword,
Nor cunning juſtify the proud man's wrong,
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears.
Where he that fills an office, ſhall eſteem
Th' occaſion it preſents of doing good
More than the perquiſite. Where law ſhall ſpeak
Seldom, and never but as wiſdom prompts
And equity; not jealous more to guard
A worthleſs form, than to decide aright.

Where faſhion ſhall not ſanctify abuſe,
Nor ſmooth good-breeding (ſupplemental grace)
With lean performance ape the work of love.

Come then, and added to thy many crowns
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! it was thine
By ancient covenant ere nature's birth,
And thou haſt made it thine by purchaſe ſince,
And overpaid its value with thy blood.
Thy ſaints proclaim thee king; and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen
Dipt in the fountain of eternal love.
Thy ſaints proclaim thee king; and thy delay
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they ſee
The dawn of thy laſt advent long-deſired,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for ſafety to the falling rocks.
The very ſpirit of the world is tired
Of its own taunting queſtion aſk'd ſo long,

" Where is the promiſe of your Lord's approach ?"
The infidel has ſhot his bolts away,
'Till his exhauſted quiver yielding none,
He gleans the blunted ſhafts that have recoiled,
And aims them at the ſhield of truth again.
The veil is rent, rent too by prieſtly hands,
That hides divinity from mortal eyes,
And all the myſteries to faith propoſed
Inſulted and traduced, are caſt aſide
As uſeleſs, to the moles and to the bats.
They now are deem'd the faithful and are praiſed,
Who conſtant only in rejecting thee,
Deny thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,
And quit their office for their error's ſake.
Blind and in love with darkneſs ! yet ev'n theſe
Worthy, compared with ſycophants, who knee
Thy name, adoring, and then preach thee man.
So fares thy church. But how thy church may fare
The world takes little thought; who will may preach,
And what they will. All paſtors are alike

To wand'ring ſheep, reſolved to follow none.
Two gods divide them all, Pleaſure and Gain.
For theſe they live, they ſacrifice to theſe,
And in their ſervice wage perpetual war
With conſcience and with thee. Luſt in their hearts,
And miſchief in their hands, they roam the earth
To prey upon each other; ſtubborn, fierce,
High-minded, foaming out their own diſgrace.
Thy prophets ſpeak of ſuch; and noting down
The features of the laſt degen'rate times,
Exhibit ev'ry lineament of theſe.
Come then, and added to thy many crowns
Receive yet one, as radiant as the reſt,
Due to thy laſt and moſt effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conqueſt of a world.

He is the happy man, whoſe life ev'n now
Shows ſomewhat of that happier life to come.
Who doomed to an obſcure but tranquil ſtate
Is pleaſed with it, and were he free to chuſe,

Would make his fate his choice. Whom peace, the frui
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happineſs; beſpeak him one
Content indeed to ſojourn while he muſt
Below the ſkies, but having there his home.
The world o'erlooks him in her buſy ſearch
Of objects more illuſtrious in her view;
And occupied as earneſtly as ſhe
Though more ſublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
She ſcorns his pleaſures, for ſhe knows them not;
He ſeeks not hers, for he has proved them vain.
He cannot ſkim the ground like ſummer birds
Purſuing gilded flies, and ſuch he deems
Her honors, her emoluments, her joys.
Therefore in contemplation is his bliſs,
Whoſe pow'r is ſuch, that whom ſhe lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a heav'n unſeen,
And ſhows him glories yet to be reveal'd.
Not ſlothful he, though ſeeming unemployed,
And cenſured oft as uſeleſs. Stilleſt ſtreams

Oft

Oft water faireſt meadows, and the bird
That flutters leaſt, is longeſt on the wing.
Aſk him indeed, what trophies he has raiſed,
Or what atchievements of immortal fame
He purpoſes, and he ſhall anſwer—none.
His warfare is within. There unfatigued
His fervent ſpirit labors. There he fights,
And there obtains freſh triumphs o'er himſelf,
And never-with'ring wreaths, compared with which
The laurels that a Cæſar reaps are weeds.
Perhaps the ſelf-approving haughty world,
That as ſhe ſweeps him with her whiſtling ſilks
Scarce deigns to notice him, or if ſhe ſee
Deems him a cypher in the works of God,
Receives advantage from his noiſeleſs hours
Of which ſhe little dreams. Perhaps ſhe owes
Her ſunſhine and her rain, her blooming ſpring
And plenteous harveſt, to the pray'r he makes,
When Iſaac like, the ſolitary ſaint
Walks forth to meditate at even-tide,

And think on her, who thinks not for herſelf.
Forgive him then, thou buſtler in concerns
Of little worth, and idler in the beſt,
If author of no miſchief and ſome good,
He ſeek his proper happineſs by means
That may advance, but cannot hinder thine.
Nor though he tread the ſecret path of life,
Engage no notice, and enjoy much eaſe,
Account him an incumbrance on the ſtate,
Receiving benefits, and rend'ring none.
His ſphere though humble, if that humble ſphere
Shine with his fair example, and though ſmall
His influence, if that influence all be ſpent
In ſoothing ſorrow and in quenching ſtrife,
In aiding helpleſs indigence, in works
From which at leaſt a grateful few derive
Some taſte of comfort in a world of woe,
Then let the ſupercilious great confeſs
He ſerves his country; recompenſes well
The ſtate beneath the ſhadow of whoſe vine

He

He ſits ſecure, and in the ſcale of life
Holds no ignoble, though a ſlighted place.
The man whoſe virtues are more felt than ſeen,
Muſt drop indeed the hope of public praiſe;
But he may boaſt what few that win it can,
That if his country ſtand not by his ſkill,
At leaſt his follies have not wrought her fall.
Polite refinement offers him in vain
Her golden tube, through which a ſenſual world
Draws groſs impurity, and likes it well,
The neat conveyance hiding all th' offence.
Not that he peeviſhly rejects a mode
Becauſe that world adopts it. If it bear
The ſtamp and clear impreſſion of good ſenſe,
And be not coſtly more than of true worth,
He puts it on, and for decorum ſake
Can wear it e'en as gracefully as ſhe.
She judges of refinement by the eye,
He by the teſt of conſcience, and a heart
Not ſoon deceived; aware that what is baſe

No poliſh can make ſterling, and that vice
Though well perfumed and elegantly dreſs'd,
Like an unburied carcaſe trick'd with flow'rs
Is but a garniſh'd nuiſance, fitter far
For cleanly riddance than for fair attire.
So life glides ſmoothly and by ſtealth away,
More golden than that age of fabled gold
Renown'd in ancient ſong; not vex'd with care
Or ſtained with guilt, beneficent, approved
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
Sō glide my life away! and ſo at laſt
My ſhare of duties decently fulfilled,
May ſome diſeaſe, not tardy to perform
Its deſtin'd office, yet with gentle ſtroke,
Diſmiſs me weary to a ſafe retreat
Beneath the turf that I have often trod.
It ſhall not grieve me, then, that once when called
To dreſs a Sofa with the flow'rs of verſe,
I play'd awhile, obedient to the fair,
With that light taſk, but ſoon to pleaſe her more

Whom flow'rs alone I knew would little pleaſe,
Let fall th' unfiniſh'd wreath, and roved for fruit.
Roved far and gather'd much. Some harſh, 'tis true,
Pick'd from the thorns and briars of reproof,
But wholeſome, well-digeſted. Grateful ſome
To palates that can taſte immortal truth,
Inſipid elſe, and ſure to be deſpiſed.
But all is in his hand whoſe praiſe I ſeek.
In vain the poet ſings, and the world hears,
If he regard not, though divine the theme.
'Tis not in artful meaſures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minſtrel's lyre
To charm his ear, whoſe eye is on the heart.
Whoſe frown can diſappoint the proudeſt ſtrain,
Whoſe approbation—proſper even mine.

AN
EPISTLE
TO
JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

DEAR JOSEPH—five and twenty years ago—
Alas! how time eſcapes—'tis even ſo—
With frequent intercourſe and always ſweet
And always friendly we were won't to cheat
A tedious hour—and now we never meet.
As ſome grave gentleman in Terence ſays,
('Twas therefore much the ſame in ancient days)
Good lack, we know not what to-morrow brings—
Strange fluctuation of all human things!
True. Changes will befall, and friends may part,
But diſtance only cannot change the heart:

And

And were I call'd to prove th' aſſertion true,
One proof ſhould ſerve, a reference to you.

Whence comes it then, that in the wane of life,
Though nothing have occur'd to kindle ſtrife,
We find the friends we fancied we had won,
Though num'rous once, reduced to few or none?
Can gold grow worthleſs that has ſtood the touch?
No. Gold they ſeemed, but they were never ſuch.
Horatio's ſervant once, with bow and cringe
Swinging the parlour door upon its hinge,
Dreading a negative, and overawed
Leſt he ſhould treſpaſs, begg'd to go abroad.
Go, fellow!—whither?—turning ſhort about—
Nay. Stay at home;—you're always going out.
'Tis but a ſtep, ſir, juſt at the ſtreet's end—
For what?—An pleaſe you, ſir, to ſee a friend.
A friend? Horatio cried, and ſeem'd to ſtart—
Yea marry ſhalt thou, and with all my heart—

And

And fetch my cloak, for though the night be raw
I'll ſee him too—the firſt I ever ſaw.
I knew the man, and knew his nature mild,
And was his play-thing often when a child,
But ſomewhat at that moment pinch'd him cloſe,
Elſe he was ſeldom bitter or moroſe:
Perhaps his confidence juſt then betray'd,
His grief might prompt him with the ſpeech he made,
Perhaps 'twas mere good-humour gave it birth,
The harmleſs play of pleaſantry and mirth.
Howe'er it was, his language in my mind
Beſpoke at leaſt a man that knew mankind.
But not to moralize too much, and ſtrain
To prove an evil of which all complain,
(I hate long arguments, verboſely ſpun)
One ſtory more, dear Hill, and I have done.
Once on a time, an Emp'ror, a wiſe man,
No matter where, in China or Japan,
Decreed that whoſoever ſhould offend
Againſt the well-known duties of a friend,

Convicted

Convicted once, ſhould ever after wear
But half a coat, and ſhow his boſom bare.
The puniſhment importing this, no doubt,
That all was naught within, and all found out.
Oh happy Britain! we have not to fear
Such hard and arbitrary meaſure here;
Elſe could a law like that which I relate,
Once have the ſanction of our triple ſtate,
Some few that I have known in days of old
Would run moſt dreadful riſk of catching cold.
While you, my friend, whatever wind ſhould blow,
Might traverſe England ſafely to and fro,
An honeſt man, cloſe-button'd to the chin,
Broad-cloth without, and a warm heart within.

TIRO-

TIROCINIUM:

OR, A

REVIEW OF SCHOOLS.

Κεφαλαιον δη παιδειας ορθη τροφη.

PLATO.

Αρχη πολιτειας απασης, νεων τροφα.

DIOG. LAERT.

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE UNWIN,

RECTOR OF STOCK IN ESSEX,

THE TUTOUR OF HIS TWO SONS,

THE FOLLOWING

POEM,

RECOMMENDING PRIVATE TUITION

IN PREFERENCE TO

AN EDUCATION AT SCHOOL,

IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

WILLIAM COWPER.

Olney, Nov. 6, 1784.

TIROCINIUM.

IT is not from his form in which we trace
Strength joined with beauty, dignity with grace,
That man, the maſter of this globe, derives
His right of empire over all that lives.
That form indeed, th' aſſociate of a mind
Vaſt in its pow'rs, ethereal in its kind,
That form, the labour of almighty ſkill,
Framed for the ſervice of a free-born will,
Aſſerts precedence, and beſpeaks controul,
But borrows all its grandeur from the ſoul.
Hers is the ſtate, the ſplendour and the throne,
An intellectual kingdom, all her own.

For her, the mem'ry fills her ample page
With truths pour'd down from ev'ry diſtant age,
For her amaſſes an unbounded ſtore,
The wiſdom of great nations, now no more,
Though laden, not incumber'd with her ſpoil,
Laborious, yet unconſcious of her toil,
When copiouſly ſupplied, then moſt enlarged,
Still to be fed, and not to be ſurcharged.
For her, the fancy roving unconfined,
The preſent muſe of ev'ry penſive mind,
Works magic wonders, adds a brighter hue
To nature's ſcenes, than nature ever knew,
At her command, winds riſe and waters roar,
Again ſhe lays them ſlumb'ring on the ſhore,
With flow'r and fruit the wilderneſs ſupplies,
Or bids the rocks in ruder pomp ariſe.
For her, the judgment, umpire in the ſtrife,
That grace and nature have to wage through life,
Quick-ſighted arbiter of good and ill,
Appointed ſage preceptor to the will,

Condemns,

Condemns, approves, and with a faithful voice
Guides the deciſion of a doubtful choice.

Why did the fiat of a God give birth
To yon fair ſun and his attendant earth,
And when deſcending he reſigns the ſkies,
Why takes the gent'ler moon her turn to riſe,
Whom ocean feels through all his countleſs waves,
And owns her pow'r on ev'ry ſhore he laves?
Why do the ſeaſons ſtill enrich the year,
Fruitful and young as in their firſt career?
Spring hangs her infant bloſſoms on the trees,
Rock'd in the cradle of the weſtern breeze,
Summer in haſte the thriving charge receives
Beneath the ſhade of her expanded leaves,
'Till autumn's fiercer heats and plenteous dews
Dye them at laſt in all their glowing hues—
'Twere wild profuſion all, and bootleſs waſte,
Pow'r miſemployed, munificence miſplaced,

Had not its author dignified the plan,
And crowned it with the majeſty of man.
Thus form'd, thus placed, intelligent, and taught,
Look where he will, the wonders God has wrought,
The wildeſt ſcorner of his Maker's laws
Finds in a ſober moment time to pauſe,
To preſs th' important queſtion on his heart,
"Why form'd at all, and wherefore as thou art?"
If man be what he ſeems, this hour a ſlave,
The next mere duſt and aſhes in the grave,
Endued with reaſon only to deſcry
His crimes and follies with an aching eye,
With paſſions, juſt that he may prove with pain
The force he ſpends againſt their fury, vain,
And if ſoon after having burnt by turns
With ev'ry luſt with which frail nature burns,
His being end where death diſſolves the bond,
The tomb take all, and all be blank beyond,
Then he, of all that nature has brought forth,
Stands ſelf-impeach'd the creature of leaſt worth,

And uſeleſs while he lives, and when he dies,
Brings into doubt the wiſdom of the ſkies.

Truths that the learn'd purſue with eager thought,
Are not important always as dear-bought,
Proving at laſt, though told in pompous ſtrains,
A childiſh waſte of philoſophic pains;
But truths on which depends our main concern,
That 'tis our ſhame and mis'ry not to learn,
Shine by the ſide of ev'ry path we tread
With ſuch a luſtre, he that runs may read.
'Tis true, that if to trifle life away
Down to the ſun-ſet of their lateſt day,
Then periſh on futurity's wide ſhore
Like fleeting exhalations, found no more,
Were all that heav'n required of human kind,
And all the plan their deſtiny deſigned,
What none could rev'rence all might juſtly blame,
And man would breathe but for his Maker's ſhame.

But reaſon heard, and nature well peruſed,
At once the dreaming mind is diſabuſed.
If all we find poſſeſſing earth, ſea, air,
Reflect his attributes who plac'd them there,
Fulfil the purpoſe, and appear deſign'd
Proofs of the wiſdom of th' all-ſeeing mind,
'Tis plain, the creature whom he choſe t' inveſt
With kingſhip and dominion o'er the reſt,
Received his nobler nature, and was made
Fit for the power in which he ſtands array'd,
That firſt or laſt, hereafter if not here,
He too might make his author's wiſdom clear,
Praiſe him on earth, or obſtinately dumb
Suffer his juſtice in a world to come.
This once believed, 'twere logic miſapplied
To prove a conſequence by none denied,
That we are bound to caſt the minds of youth
Betimes into the mould of heav'nly truth,
That taught of God they may indeed be wiſe,
Nor ignorantly wand'ring miſs the ſkies.

In

In early days the conſcience has in moſt
A quickneſs, which in later life is loſt,
Preſerved from guilt by ſalutary fears,
Or, guilty, ſoon relenting into tears.
Too careleſs often as our years proceed,
What friends we ſort with, or what books we read,
Our parents yet exert a prudent care
To feed our infant minds with proper fare,
And wiſely ſtore the nurs'ry by degrees
With wholeſome learning, yet acquired with eaſe.
Neatly ſecured from being ſoiled or torn
Beneath a pane of thin tranſlucent horn,
A book (to pleaſe us at a tender age
'Tis call'd a book, though but a ſingle page)
Preſents the pray'r the Saviour deign'd to teach,
Which children uſe, and parſons—when they preach.
Liſping our ſyllables, we ſcramble next,
Through moral narrative, or ſacred text,
And learn with wonder how this world began,
Who made, who marr'd, and who has ranſom'd man.

Points,

Points, which unleſs the Scripture made them plain,
The wiſeſt heads might agitate in vain.
Oh thou, whom borne on fancy's eager wing
Back to the ſeaſon of life's happy ſpring,
I pleaſed remember, and while mem'ry yet
Holds faſt her office here, can ne'er forget,
Ingenious dreamer, in whoſe well-told tale
Sweet fiction and ſweet truth alike prevail,
Whoſe hum'rous vein, ſtrong ſenſe, and ſimple ſtile,
May teach the gayeſt, make the graveſt ſmile,
Witty, and well-employ'd, and like thy Lord,
Speaking in parables his ſlighted word,
I name thee not, leſt ſo deſpiſed a name
Should move a ſneer at thy deſerved fame,
Yet ev'n in tranſitory life's late day
That mingles all my brown with ſober gray,
Revere the man, whoſe *Pilgrim* marks the road
And guides the *Progreſs* of the ſoul to God.
'Twere well with moſt, if books that could engage
Their childhood, pleaſed them at a riper age;

The

The man approving what had charm'd the boy,
Would die at laſt in comfort, peace, and joy,
And not with curſes on his art who ſtole
The gem of truth from his unguarded ſoul.
The ſtamp of artleſs piety impreſs'd
By kind tuition on his yielding breaſt,
The youth now bearded, and yet pert and raw,
Regards with ſcorn, though once received with awe,
And warp'd into the labyrinth of lies
That babblers, called philoſophers, deviſe,
Blaſphemes his creed as founded on a plan
Replete with dreams, unworthy of a man.
Touch but his nature in its ailing part,
Aſſert the native evil of his heart,
His pride reſents the charge, although the proof *
Riſe in his forehead, and ſeem rank enough;
Point to the cure, deſcribe a Saviour's croſs
As God's expedient to retrieve his loſs,

The

* See Chron. Ch. xxvi. v. 19.

The young apoſtate ſickens at the view,
And hates it with the malice of a Jew.

How weak the barrier of mere nature proves
Oppos'd againſt the pleaſures nature loves!
While ſelf-betray'd, and wilfully undone,
She longs to yield, no ſooner wooed than won.
Try now the merits of this bleſt exchange
Of modeſt truth for wits eccentric range.
Time was, he cloſed as he began the day
With decent duty, not aſhamed to pray;
The practice was a bond upon his heart,
A pledge he gave for a conſiſtent part,
Nor could he dare preſumptuouſly diſpleaſe
A pow'r confeſs'd ſo lately on his knees.
But now, farewell all legendary tales,
The ſhadows fly, philoſophy prevails,
Pray'r to the winds and caution to the waves,
Religion makes the free by nature ſlaves,

Prieſts

Prieſts have invented, and the world admired
What knaviſh prieſts promulgate as inſpired,
'Till reaſon, now no longer overawed,
Reſumes her pow'rs, and ſpurns the clumſy fraud,
And common-ſenſe diffuſing real day,
The meteor of the goſpel dies away.
Such rhapſodies our ſhrewd diſcerning youth
Learn from expert enquirers after truth,
Whoſe only care, might truth preſume to ſpeak,
Is not to find what they profeſs to ſeek.
And thus well-tutor'd only while we ſhare
A mother's lectures and a nurſe's care,
And taught at ſchools much mythologic ſtuff *,
But ſound religion ſparingly enough,

Our

* The author begs leave to explain; ſenſible that without ſuch knowledge, neither the ancient poets nor hiſtorians can be taſted or indeed underſtood, he does not mean to cenſure the pains that are taken to inſtruct a ſchool-boy in the religion of the heathen, but merely that neglect of chriſtian culture which leaves him ſhamefully ignorant of his own.

Our early notices of truth diſgraced
Soon loſe their credit, and are all effaced.

Would you your ſon ſhould be a ſot or dunce,
Laſcivious, headſtrong, or all theſe at once,
That in good time, the ſtripling's finiſh'd taſte
For looſe expence and faſhionable waſte,
Should prove your ruin, and his own at laſt,
Train him in public with a mob of boys,
Childiſh in miſchief only and in noiſe,
Elſe of a manniſh growth, and five in ten
In infidelity and lewdneſs, men.
There ſhall he learn ere ſixteen winters old,
That authors are moſt uſeful, pawn'd or ſold,
That pedantry is all that ſchools impart,
But taverns teach the knowledge of the heart;
There waiter Dick with Bacchanalian lays
Shall win his heart and have his drunken praiſe,
His counſellor and boſom-friend ſhall prove,
And ſome ſtreet-pacing harlot his firſt love.

Schools,

Schools, unleſs diſcipline were doubly ſtrong,
Detain their adoleſcent charge too long.
The management of Tiro's of eighteen
Is difficult, their puniſhment obſcene.
The ſtout tall Captain, whoſe ſuperior ſize
The minor heroes view with envious eyes,
Becomes their pattern, upon whom they fix
Their whole attention, and ape all his tricks.
His pride that ſcorns t' obey or to ſubmit,
With them is courage, his effront'ry wit;
His wild excurſions, window-breaking feats,
Robb'ry of gardens, quarrels in the ſtreets,
His hair-breadth 'ſcapes, and all his daring ſchemes,
Tranſport them, and are made their fav'rite themes.
In little boſoms ſuch atchievements ſtrike
A kindred ſpark, they burn to do the like.
Thus half accompliſh'd, ere he yet begin
To ſhow the peeping down upon his chin,
And as maturity of years come on
Made juſt th' adept that you deſign'd your ſon,

T' inſure

T' inſure the perſeverance of his courſe,
And give your monſtrous project all its force,
Send him to college. If he there be tamed,
Or in one article of vice reclaimed,
Where no regard of ord'nances is ſhown
Or look'd for now, the fault muſt be his own.
Some ſneaking virtue lurks in him no doubt,
Where neither ſtrumpet's charms nor drinking-bout,
Nor gambling practices can find it out.
Such youths of ſpirit, and that ſpirit too,
Ye nurs'ries of our boys, we owe to you.
Though from ourſelves the miſchief more proceeds,
For public ſchools 'tis public folly feeds.
The ſlaves of cuſtom and eſtabliſh'd mode,
With pack-horſe conſtancy we keep the road
Crooked or ſtraight, through quags or thorny dells,
True to the jingling of our leaders bells.
To follow fooliſh precedents, and wink
With both our eyes, is eaſier than to think,

And

And ſuch an age as ours baulks no expence
Except of caution and of common-ſenſe,
Elſe ſure, notorious fact and proof ſo plain
Would turn our ſteps into a wiſer train.
I blame not thoſe who with what care they can
O'erwatch the num'rous and unruly clan,
Or if I blame, 'tis only that they dare
Promiſe a work of which they muſt deſpair.
Have ye, ye ſage intendants of the whole,
An ubiquarian preſence and controul,
Eliſha's eye, that when Gehazi ſtray'd
Went with him, and ſaw all the game he play'd?
Yes—ye are conſcious; and on all the ſhelves
Your pupils ſtrike upon, have ſtruck yourſelves.
Or if by nature ſober, ye had then,
Boys as ye were, the gravity of men,
Ye knew at leaſt, by conſtant proofs addreſs'd
To ears and eyes, the vices of the reſt.
But ye connive at what ye cannot cure,
And evils not to be endured, endure,

Leſt pow'r exerted, out without ſucceſs,
Should make the little ye retain ſtill leſs.
Ye once were juſtly famed for bringing forth
Undoubted ſcholarſhip and genuine worth,
And in the firmament of fame ſtill ſhines
A glory bright as that of all the ſigns
Of poets rais'd by you, and ſtateſmen and divines.
Peace to them all, thoſe brilliant times are fled,
And no ſuch lights are kindling in their ſtead.
Our ſtriplings ſhine indeed, but with ſuch rays
As ſet the midnight riot in a blaze,
And ſeem, if judged by their expreſſive looks,
Deeper in none than in their ſurgeons books.

Say muſe (for education made the ſong,
No muſe can heſitate or linger long)
What cauſes move us, knowing as we muſt
That theſe *Menageries* all fail their truſt,
To ſend our ſons to ſcout and ſcamper there,
While colts and puppies coſt us ſo much care?

Be

Be it a weakneſs, it deſerves ſome praiſe,
We love the play-place of our early days.
The ſcene is touching, and the heart is ſtone
That feels not at that ſight, and feels at none.
The wall on which we tried our graving ſkill,
The very name we carved ſubſiſting ſtill,
The bench on which we ſat while deep-employ'd
Though mangled, hack'd and hew'd, not yet deſtroy'd,
The little ones unbutton'd, glowing hot,
Playing our games, and on the very ſpot,
As happy as we once, to kneel and draw
The chalky ring, and knuckle down at taw,
To pitch the ball into the grounded hat,
Or drive it devious with a dext'rous pat,
The pleaſing ſpectacle at once excites
Such recollection of our own delights,
That viewing it, we ſeem almoſt t' obtain
Our innocent ſweet ſimple years again.
This fond attachment to the well-known place
Whence firſt we ſtarted into life's long race,

Maintains its hold with ſuch unfailing ſway,
We feel it ev'n in age, and at our lateſt day.
Hark! how the ſire of chits, whoſe future ſhare
Of claſſic food begins to be his care,
With his own likeneſs placed on either knee,
Indulges all a father's heart-felt glee,
And tells them as he ſtrokes their ſilver locks,
That they muſt ſoon learn Latin and to box;
Then turning, he regales his liſt'ning wife
With all th' adventures of his early life,
His ſkill in coachmanſhip or driving chaiſe,
In bilking tavern bills and ſpouting plays,
What ſhifts he uſed detected in a ſcrape,
How he was flogg'd, or had the luck t' eſcape,
What ſums he loſt at play, and how he ſold
Watch, ſeals, and all, 'till all his pranks are told.
Retracing thus his *frolics* ('tis a name
That palliates deeds of folly and of ſhame)
He gives the local biaſs all its ſway,
Reſolves that where he play'd his ſons ſhall play,

And

And deſtines their bright genius to be ſhown
Juſt in the ſcene where he diſplay'd his own.
The meek and baſhful boy will ſoon be taught
To be as bold and forward as he ought,
The rude will ſcuffle through with eaſe enough,
Great ſchools ſuit beſt the ſturdy and the rough.
Ah happy deſignation, prudent choice,
Th' event is ſure, expect it and rejoice!
Soon ſee your wiſh fulfilled in either child,
The pert made perter, and the tame made wild.

The great indeed, by titles, riches, birth,
Excuſed th' incumbrance of more ſolid worth,
Are beſt diſpoſed of, where with moſt ſucceſs
They may acquire that confident addreſs,
Thoſe habits of profuſe and lewd expence,
That ſcorn of all delights but thoſe of ſenſe,
Which though in plain plebeians we condemn,
With ſo much reaſon all expect from them.

But families of leſs illuſtrious fame,
Whoſe chief diſtinction is their ſpotleſs name,
Whoſe heirs, their honours none, their income ſmall,
Muſt ſhine by true deſert, or not at all,
What dream they of, that with ſo little care
They riſk their hopes, their deareſt treaſure there?
They dream of little Charles or William graced
With wig prolix, down-flowing to his waiſt,
They ſee th' attentive crowds his talents draw,
They hear him ſpeak—the oracle of law.
The father who deſigns his babe a prieſt,
Dreams him epiſcopally ſuch at leaſt,
And while the playful jockey ſcours the room
Briſkly, aſtride upon the parlour broom,
In fancy ſees him more ſuperbly ride
In coach with purple lined, and mitres on its ſide.
Events improbable and ſtrange as theſe,
Which only a parental eye foreſees,
A public ſchool ſhall bring to paſs with eaſe.

But how? reſides ſuch virtue in that air
As muſt create an appetite for pray'r?
And will it breathe into him all the zeal
That candidates for ſuch a prize ſhould feel,
To take the lead and be the foremoſt ſtill
In all true worth and literary ſkill?
" Ah blind to bright futurity, untaught
" The knowledge of the world, and dull of thought!
" Church-ladders are not always mounted beſt
" By learned Clerks and Latiniſts profeſs'd.
" Th' exalted prize demands an upward look,
" Not to be found by poring on a book.
" Small ſkill in Latin, and ſtill leſs in Greek,
" Is more than adequate to all I ſeek;
" Let erudition grace him or not grace,
" I give the bawble but the ſecond place,
" His wealth, fame, honors, all that I intend,
" Subſiſt and center in one point—a friend.
" A friend, whate'er he ſtudies or neglects,
" Shall give him conſequence, heal all defects,

" His intercourſe with peers, and ſons of peers—
" There dawns the ſplendour of his future years,
" In that bright quarter his propitious ſkies
" Shall bluſh betimes, and there his glory riſe.
" *Your Lordſhip and your Grace*, what ſchool can teach
" A rhet'ric equal to thoſe parts of ſpeech?
" What need of Homer's verſe, or Tully's proſe,
" Sweet interjections! if he learn but thoſe?
" Let rev'rend churls his ignorance rebuke,
" Who ſtarve upon a dogs-ear'd Pentateuch,
" The parſon knows enough who knows a Duke."—
Egregious purpoſe! worthily begun
In barb'rous proſtitution of your ſon,
Preſſed on *his* part by means that would diſgrace
A ſcriv'ner's clerk or footman out of place,
And ending, if at laſt its end be gained,
In ſacrilege, in God's own houſe profaned.
It may ſucceed; and if his ſins ſhould call
For more than common puniſhment, it ſhall.

The

The wretch ſhall riſe, and be the thing on earth
Leaſt qualified in honor, learning, worth,
To occupy a ſacred, awful poſt,
In which the beſt and worthieſt tremble moſt.
The *royal letters* are a thing of courſe,
A king that would, might recommend his horſe,
And Deans no doubt and Chapters, with one voice,
As bound in duty, would confirm the choice.
Behold your Biſhop! well he plays his part,
Chriſtian in name, and Infidel in heart,
Ghoſtly in office, earthly in his plan,
A ſlave at court, elſewhere a lady's man,
Dumb as a ſenator, and as a prieſt
A piece of mere church-furniture at beſt;
To live eſtranged from God his total ſcope,
And his end ſure, without one glimpſe of hope,
But fair although and feaſible it ſeem,
Depend not much upon your golden dream;
For Providence that ſeems concern'd t' exempt
The hallow'd bench from abſolute contempt,

In

In ſpite of all the wrigglers into place,
Still keeps a ſeat or two for worth and grace,
And therefore 'tis, that, though the ſight be rare,
We ſometimes ſee a Lowth or Bagot there.
Beſides, ſchool-friendſhips are not always found,
Though fair in promiſe, permanent and ſound.
The moſt diſint'reſted and virtuous minds
In early years connected, time unbinds;
New ſituations give a diff'rent caſt
Of habit, inclination, temper, taſte,
And he that ſeem'd our counterpart at firſt,
Soon ſhows the ſtrong ſimilitude revers'd.
Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,
And make miſtakes for manhood to reform.
Boys are at beſt but pretty buds unblown,
Whoſe ſcent and hues are rather gueſs'd than known.
Each dreams that each is juſt what he appears,
But learns his error in maturer years,
When diſpoſition like a ſail unfurl'd
Shows all its rents and patches to the world.

If therefore, ev'n when honeſt in deſign,
A boyiſh friendſhip may ſo ſoon decline,
'Twere wiſer ſure t' inſpire a little heart
With juſt abhorrence of ſo mean a part,
Than ſet your ſon to work at a vile trade
For wages ſo unlikely to be paid.

Our public hives of puerile reſort
That are of chief and moſt approved report,
To ſuch baſe hopes in many a ſordid ſoul
Owe their repute in part, but not the whole.
A principle, whoſe proud pretenſions paſs
Unqueſtion'd, though the jewel be but glaſs,
That with a world not often over-nice
Ranks as a virtue, and is yet a vice,
Or rather a groſs compound, juſtly tried,
Of envy, hatred, jealouſy, and pride,
Contributes moſt perhaps t' inhance their fame,
And Emulation is its ſpecious name.

Boys once on fire with that contentious zeal
Feel all the rage that female rivals feel,
The prize of beauty in a woman's eyes
Not brighter than in theirs the ſcholar's prize.
The ſpirit of that competition burns
With all varieties of ill by turns,
Each vainly magnifies his own ſucceſs,
Reſents his fellows, wiſhes it were leſs,
Exults in his miſcarriage if he fail,
Deems his reward too great if he prevail,
And labors to ſurpaſs him day and night,
Leſs for improvement, than to tickle ſpite.
The ſpur is pow'rful, and I grant its force,
It pricks the genius forward in its courſe,
Allows ſhort time for play, and none for ſloth,
And felt alike by each, advances both,
But judge where ſo much evil intervenes,
The end, though plauſible, not worth the means.
Weigh, for a moment, claſſical deſert
Againſt an heart depraved and temper hurt,

Hurt too perhaps for life, for early wrong
Done to the nobler part, affects it long,
And you are ſtaunch indeed in learning's cauſe,
If you can crown a diſcipline that draws
Such miſchiefs after it, with much applauſe.

Connection form'd for int'reſt, and endear'd
By ſelfiſh views, thus cenſured and caſhier'd,
And emulation, as engend'ring hate,
Doom'd to a no leſs ignominious fate,
The props of ſuch proud ſeminaries fall,
The JACHIN and the BOAZ of them all.
Great ſchools rejected then, as thoſe that ſwell
Beyond a ſize that can be managed well,
Shall royal inſtitutions miſs the bays,
And ſmall academies win all the praiſe?
Force not my drift beyond its juſt intent,
I praiſe a ſchool as Pope a government;
So take my judgment in his language dreſs'd,
"Whate'er is beſt adminiſter'd, is beſt."

Few

Few boys are born with talents that excel,
But all are capable of living well.
Then aſk not, whether limited or large,
But, watch they ſtrictly, or neglect their charge?
If anxious only that their boys may *learn*
While *Morals* languiſh, a deſpiſed concern,
The great and ſmall deſerve one common blame,
Diff'rent in ſize, but in effect the ſame.
Much zeal in virtue's cauſe all teachers boaſt,
Though motives of mere lucre ſway the moſt.
Therefore in towns and cities they abound,
For there, the game they ſeek is eaſieſt found,
Though there, in ſpite of all that care can do,
Traps to catch youth are moſt abundant too.
If ſhrewd, and of a well-conſtructed brain,
Keen in purſuit, and vig'rous to retain,
Your ſon come forth a prodigy of ſkill,
As whereſoever taught, ſo form'd, he will,
The pædagogue, with ſelf-complacent air,
Claims more than half the praiſe as his due ſhare;

But

But if with all his genius he betray,
Not more intelligent, than looſe and gay,
Such vicious habits as diſgrace his name,
Threaten his health, his fortune, and his fame,
Though want of due reſtraint alone have bred
The ſymptoms that you ſee with ſo much dread,
Unenvied there, he may ſuſtain alone
The whole reproach, the fault was all his own.

Oh 'tis a ſight to be with joy peruſed
By all whom ſentiment has not abuſed,
New-fangled ſentiment, the boaſted grace
Of thoſe who never feel in the right place,
A ſight ſurpaſſed by none that we can ſhow,
Though Veſtris on one leg ſtill ſhine below,
A father bleſt with an ingenuous ſon,
Father and friend and tutour all in one.
How? turn again to tales long ſince forgot,
Æſop and Phædrus and the reſt?—why not?

He

He will not bluſh that has a father's heart,
To take in childiſh plays a childiſh part,
But bends his ſturdy back to any toy
That youth takes pleaſure in, to pleaſe his boy;
Then why reſign into a ſtranger's hand
A taſk as much within your own command,
That God and nature and your int'reſt too
Seem with one voice to delegate to you?
Why hire a lodging in a houſe unknown
For one whoſe tend'reſt thoughts all hover round
your own?
This ſecond weaning, needleſs as it is,
How does it lacerate both your heart and his!
Th' indented ſtick that loſes day by day
Notch after notch, 'till all are ſmooth'd away,
Bears witneſs long ere his diſmiſſion come,
With what intenſe deſire he wants his home.
But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof
Bid fair enough to anſwer in the proof

Harmleſs

Harmleſs and ſafe and nat'ral as they are,
A diſappointment waits him even there:
Arrived, he feels an unexpected change,
He bluſhes, hangs his head, is ſhy and ſtrange,
No longer takes, as once, with fearleſs eaſe
His fav'rite ſtand between his father's knees,
But ſeeks the corner of ſome diſtant ſeat,
And eyes the door, and watches a retreat,
And leaſt familiar where he ſhould be moſt,
Feels all his happieſt privileges loſt.
Alas, poor boy!—the natural effect
Of love by abſence chilled into reſpect.
Say, what accompliſhments at ſchool acquired
Brings he to ſweeten fruits ſo undeſired?
Thou well deſerv'ſt an alienated ſon,
Unleſs thy conſcious heart acknowledge—none.
None that in thy domeſtic ſnug receſs,
He had not made his own with more addreſs,
Though ſome perhaps that ſhock thy feeling mind,
And better never learn'd, or left behind.

Add too, that thus eſtranged thou canſt obtain
By no kind arts his confidence again,
That here begins with moſt that long complaint
Of filial frankneſs loſt, and love grown faint,
Which, oft neglected in life's waning years,
A parent pours into regardleſs ears.

Like caterpillars dangling under trees
By ſlender threads, and ſwinging in the breeze,
Which filthily bewray and ſore diſgrace
The boughs in which are bred th' unſeemly race,
While ev'ry worm induſtriouſly weaves
And winds his web about the rivell'd leaves;
So num'rous are the follies that annoy
The mind and heart of ev'ry ſprightly boy,
Imaginations noxious and perverſe,
Which admonition can alone diſperſe.
Th' encroaching nuiſance aſks a faithful hand,
Patient, affectionate, of high command,

To

To check the procreation of a breed
Sure to exhauſt the plant on which they feed.
'Tis not enough that Greek or Roman page
At ſtated hours his freakiſh thoughts engage,
Ev'n in his paſtimes he requires a friend
To warn, and teach him ſafely to unbend,
O'er all his pleaſures gently to preſide,
Watch his emotions and controul their tide,
And levying thus, and with an eaſy ſway,
A tax of profit from his very play,
T' impreſs a value not to be eras'd
On moments ſquander'd elſe, and running all to waſte.
And ſeems it nothing in a father's eye
That unimproved thoſe many moments fly?
And is he well content, his ſon ſhould find
No nouriſhment to feed his growing mind
But conjugated verbs, and nouns declined?
For ſuch is all the mental food purvey'd
By public hacknies in the ſchooling trade,

Who feed a pupil's intellect with ſtore
Of ſyntax truly, but with little more,
Diſmiſs their cares when they diſmiſs their flock,
Machines themſelves, and govern'd by a clock.
Perhaps a father bleſt with any brains
Would deem it no abuſe or waſte of pains,
T' improve this diet at no great expence,
With ſav'ry truth and wholeſome common ſenſe,
To lead his ſon for proſpects of delight
To ſome not ſteep, though philoſophic height,
Thence to exhibit to his wondering eyes
Yon circling worlds, their diſtance, and their ſize,
The moons of Jove and Saturn's belted ball,
And the harmonious order of them all;
To ſhow him in an inſect or a flow'r,
Such microſcopic proofs of ſkill and pow'r,
As hid from ages paſt, God now diſplays
To combat Atheiſts with in modern days;
To ſpread the earth before him, and commend,
With deſignation of the finger's end,

Its

Its various parts to his attentive note,
Thus bringing home to him the moſt remote;
To teach his heart to glow with gen'rous flame
Caught from the deeds of men of ancient fame,
And more than all, with commendation due
To ſet ſome living worthy in his view,
Whoſe fair example may at once inſpire
A wiſh to copy what he muſt admire.
Such knowledge gain'd betimes, and which appears,
Though ſolid, not too weighty for his years,
Sweet in itſelf, and not forbidding ſport,
When health demands it, of athletic ſort,
Would make him what ſome lovely boys have been,
And more than one perhaps that I have ſeen,
An evidence and reprehenſion both
Of the mere ſchool-boy's lean and tardy growth.

Art thou a man profeſſionally tied,
With all thy faculties elſewhere applied,

Too buſy to intend a meaner care
Than how to enrich thyſelf, and next, thine heir;
Or art thou (as though rich, perhaps thou art)
But poor in knowledge, having none to impart—
Behold that figure, neat, though plainly clad,
His ſprightly mingled with a ſhade of ſad,
Not of a nimble tongue, though now and then
Heard to articulate like other men,
No jeſter, and yet lively in diſcourſe,
His phraſe well choſen, clear, and full of force,
And his addreſs, if not quite French in eaſe,
Not Engliſh ſtiff, but frank and form'd to pleaſe,
Low in the world becauſe he ſcorns its arts,
A man of letters, manners, morals, parts,
Unpatronized, and therefore little known,
Wiſe for himſelf and his few friends alone,
In him, thy well-appointed proxy ſee,
Armed for a work too difficult for thee,
Prepared by taſte, by learning, and true worth,
To form thy ſon, to ſtrike his genius forth,

Beneath

Beneath thy roof, beneath thine eye to prove
The force of diſcipline when back'd by love,
To double all thy pleaſure in thy child,
His mind informed, his morals undefiled.
Safe under ſuch a wing, the boy ſhall ſhow
No ſpots contracted among grooms below,
Nor taint his ſpeech with meanneſſes deſign'd
By footman Tom for witty and refin'd.
There—in his commerce with the liv'ried herd
Lurks the contagion chiefly to be fear'd.
For ſince (ſo faſhion dictates) all who claim
An higher than a mere plebeian fame,
Find it expedient, come what miſchief may,
To entertain a thief or two in pay,
And they that can afford th' expence of more,
Some half a dozen, and ſome half a ſcore,
Great cauſe occurs to ſave him from a band
So ſure to ſpoil him, and ſo near at hand,
A point ſecured, if once he be ſupplied
With ſome ſuch Mentor always at his ſide.

Are ſuch men rare? perhaps they would abound
Were occupation eaſier to be found,
Were education, elſe ſo ſure to fail,
Conducted on a manageable ſcale,
And ſchools that have outlived all juſt eſteem,
Exchang'd for the ſecure domeſtic ſcheme.
But having found him, be thou duke or earl,
Show thou haſt ſenſe enough to prize the pearl,
And as thou wouldſt th' advancement of thine heir
In all good faculties beneath his care,
Reſpect, as is but rational and juſt,
A man deem'd worthy of ſo dear a truſt.
Deſpiſed by thee, what more can he expect
From youthful folly, than the ſame neglect?
A flat and fatal negative obtains
That inſtant, upon all his future pains;
His leſſons tire, his mild rebukes offend,
And all the inſtructions of thy ſon's beſt friend
Are a ſtream choak'd, or trickling to no end.

Doom

Doom him not then to ſolitary meals,
But recollect that he has ſenſe, and feels,
And, that poſſeſſor of a ſoul refin'd,
An upright heart and cultivated mind,
His poſt not mean, his talents not unknown,
He deems it hard to vegetate alone.
And if admitted at thy board he ſit,
Account him no juſt mark for idle wit,
Offend not him whom modeſty reſtrains
From repartee, with jokes that he diſdains,
Much leſs transfix his feelings with an oath,
Nor frown, unleſs he vaniſh with the cloth—
And truſt me, his utility may reach
To more than he is hired or bound to teach,
Much traſh unutter'd and ſome ills undone,
Through rev'rence of the cenſor of thy ſon.

But if thy table be indeed unclean,
Foul with exceſs, and with diſcourſe obſcene,

And

And thou a wretch, whom, following her old plan,
The world accounts an honourable man,
Becauſe forſooth thy courage has been tried,
And ſtood the teſt, perhaps on the wrong ſide,
Though thou hadſt never grace enough to prove
That any thing but vice could win thy love;
Or haſt thou a polite, card-playing wife,
Chained to the routs that ſhe frequents, for life,
Who, juſt when induſtry begins to ſnore,
Flies, wing'd with joy, to ſome coach-crowded door,
And thrice in ev'ry winter throngs thine own
With half the chariots and ſedans in town,
Thyſelf meanwhile e'en ſhifting as thou mayſt,
Not very ſober though, nor very chaſte;
Or is thine houſe, though leſs ſuperb thy rank,
If not a ſcene of pleaſure, a mere blank,
And thou at beſt, and in thy ſob'reſt mood,
A trifler, vain, and empty of all good?
Though mercy for thyſelf thou canſt have none,
Hear nature plead, ſhow mercy to thy ſon.

Saved from his home, where ev'ry day brings forth
Some miſchief fatal to his future worth,
Find him a better in a diſtant ſpot,
Within ſome pious paſtor's humble cot,
Where vile example (your's I chiefly mean,
The moſt ſeducing and the oft'neſt ſeen)
May never more be ſtamp'd upon his breaſt,
Not yet perhaps incurably impreſs'd.
Where early reſt makes early riſing ſure,
Diſeaſe or comes not, or finds eaſy cure,
Prevented much by diet neat and plain,
Or if it enter, ſoon ſtarved out again.
Where all th' attention of his faithful hoſt
Diſcreetly limited to two at moſt,
May raiſe ſuch fruits as ſhall reward his care,
And not at laſt evaporate in air.
Where ſtillneſs aiding ſtudy, and his mind
Serene, and to his duties much inclined,
Not occupied in day-dreams, as at home,
Of pleaſures paſt or follies yet to come,

His

His virtuous toil may terminate at laſt
In ſettled habit and decided taſte.
But whom do I adviſe? the faſhion-led,
Th' incorrigibly wrong, the deaf, the dead,
Whom care and cool deliberation ſuit
Not better much than ſpectacles a brute,
Who if their ſons ſome ſlight tuition ſhare,
Deem it of no great moment, whoſe, or where,
Too proud t' adopt the thoughts of one unknown,
And much too gay t' have any of their own.
But courage man! methought the muſe replied,
Mankind are various, and the world is wide;
The oſtrich, ſillieſt of the feather'd kind,
And form'd of God without a parent's mind,
Commits her eggs, incautious, to the duſt,
Forgetful that the foot may cruſh the truſt;
And while on public nurs'ries they rely,
Not knowing, and too oft not caring why,
Irrational in what they thus prefer,
No few, that would ſeem wiſe, reſemble her.

But

But all are not alike. Thy warning voice
May here and there prevent erroneous choice,
And ſome perhaps, who, buſy as they are,
Yet make their progeny their deareſt care,
Whoſe hearts will ache once told what ills may reach
Their offspring left upon ſo wild a beach,
Will need no ſtreſs of argument t' inforce
Th' expedience of a leſs advent'rous courſe.
The reſt will ſlight thy counſel, or condemn,
But *they* have human feelings. Turn to *them*.

To you then, tenants of life's middle ſtate,
Securely placed between the ſmall and great,
Whoſe character, yet undebauch'd, retains
Two thirds of all the virtue that remains,
Who wiſe yourſelves, deſire your ſons ſhould learn
Your wiſdom and your ways—to you I turn.
Look round you on a world perverſely blind,
See what contempt is fall'n on human kind;

See

See wealth abuſed, and dignities miſplac'd,
Great titles, offices, and truſts diſgrac'd,
Long lines of anceſtry renown'd of old,
Their noble qualities all quench'd and cold;
See Bedlam's cloſetted and hand-cuff'd charge
Surpaſs'd in frenzy by the mad at large;
See great commanders making war a trade,
Great lawyers, lawyers without ſtudy made,
Churchmen, in whoſe eſteem their bleſt employ
Is odious, and their wages all their joy,
Who far enough from furniſhing their ſhelves
With goſpel lore, turn infidels themſelves;
See womanhood deſpiſed, and manhood ſhamed
With infamy too nauſeous to be named,
Fops at all corners lady-like in mien,
Civetted fellows, ſmelt ere they are ſeen,
Elſe coarſe and rude in manners, and their tongue
On fire with curſes and with nonſenſe hung,
Now fluſh'd with drunk'neſs, now with whoredom pale,
Their breath a ſample of laſt night's regale;

See volunteers in all the vileſt arts
Men well endowed, of honourable parts,
Deſign'd by nature wiſe, but ſelf-made fools;
All theſe, and more like theſe, were bred at ſchools.
And if it chance, as ſometimes chance it will,
That though ſchool bred, the boy be virtuous ſtill,
Such rare exceptions ſhining in the dark,
Prove rather than impeach the juſt remark,
As here and there a twinkling ſtar deſcried
Serves but to ſhow how black is all beſide.
Now look on him whoſe very voice in tone
Juſt echos thine, whoſe features are thine own,
And ſtroke his poliſh'd cheek of pureſt red,
And lay thine hand upon his flaxen head,
And ſay, my boy, th' unwelcome hour is come,
When thou, tranſplanted from thy genial home,
Muſt find a colder ſoil and bleaker air,
And truſt for ſafety to a ſtranger's care;
What character, what turn thou wilt aſſume
From conſtant converſe with I know not whom,

Who there will court thy friendſhip, with what views,
And, artleſs as thou art, whom thou wilt chuſe,
Though much depends on what thy choice ſhall be,
Is all chance-medley and unknown to me.
Canſt thou, the tear juſt trembling on thy lids,
And while the dreadful riſk foreſeen, forbids,
Free too, and under no conſtraining force,
Unleſs the ſway of cuſtom warp thy courſe,
Lay ſuch a ſtake upon the loſing ſide,
Merely to gratify ſo blind a guide?
Thou canſt not: Nature pulling at thine heart
Condemns th' unfatherly, th' imprudent part.
Thou wouldſt not, deaf to Nature's tend'reſt plea,
Turn him adrift upon a rolling ſea,
Nor ſay, *go thither*, conſcious that there lay
A brood of aſps, or quickſands in his way;
Then only govern'd by the ſelf-ſame rule
Of nat'ral pity, ſend him not to ſchool.
No—Guard him better: Is he not thine own,
Thyſelf in miniature, thy fleſh, thy bone?

And

And hopeſt thou not ('tis ev'ry father's hope)
That ſince thy ſtrength muſt with thy years elope,
And thou wilt need ſome comfort to aſſuage
Health's laſt farewell, a ſtaff of thine old age,
That then, in recompenſe of all thy cares,
Thy child ſhall ſhow reſpect to thy grey hairs,
Befriend thee, of all other friends bereft,
And give thy life its only cordial left?
Aware then how much danger intervenes,
To compaſs that good end, forecaſt the means.
His heart, now paſſive, yields to thy command;
Secure it thine. Its key is in thine hand.
If thou deſert thy charge and throw it wide,
Nor heed what gueſts there enter and abide,
Complain not if attachments lewd and baſe
Supplant thee in it, and uſurp thy place.
But if thou guard its ſecret chambers ſure
From vicious inmates and delights impure,
Either his gratitude ſhall hold him faſt,
And keep him warm and filial to the laſt,

Or if he prove unkind, (as who can ſay
But being man, and therefore frail, he may)
One comfort yet ſhall cheer thine aged heart,
Howe'er he ſlight thee, thou haſt done thy part.

Oh barb'rous! would'ſt thou with a Gothic hand
Pull down the ſchools—what!—all the ſchools i' th' land?
Or throw them up to liv'ry-nags and grooms,
Or turn them into ſhops and auction-rooms?
—A captious queſtion, Sir, and your's is one,
Deſerves an anſwer ſimilar, or none.
Would'ſt thou, poſſeſſor of a flock, employ
(Apprized that he is ſuch) a careleſs boy,
And feed him well, and give him handſome pay,
Merely to ſleep, and let them run aſtray?
Survey our ſchools and colleges, and ſee
A ſight not much unlike my ſimile.
From education, as the leading cauſe,
The public character its colour draws,

Thence

Thence the prevailing manners take their caſt,
Extravagant or ſober, looſe or chaſte.
And though I would not advertiſe them yet,
Nor write on each—*This Building to be Let*,
Unleſs the world were all prepared to embrace
A plan well worthy to ſupply their place,
Yet backward as they are, and long have been,
To cultivate and keep the MORALS clean,
(Forgive the crime) I wiſh them, I confeſs,
Or better managed, or encouraged leſs.

THE DIVERTING

HISTORY

OF

JOHN GILPIN,

SHEWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE INTENDED, AND CAME SAFE HOME AGAIN.

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JOHN GILPIN was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A train-band Captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's ſpouſe ſaid to her dear,
—Though wedded we have been
Theſe twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have ſeen.

To-morrow is our wedding-day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
All in a chaiſe and pair.

My ſiſter and my ſiſter's child,
Myſelf and children three
Will fill the chaiſe, ſo you muſt ride
On horſeback after we.

He ſoon replied—I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are ſhe, my deareſt dear,
Therefore it ſhall be done.

I am a linen-draper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the Callender
Will lend his horſe to go.

Quoth

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin—That's well ſaid;
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furniſh'd with our own,
Which is both bright and clear.

John Gilpin kiſs'd his loving wife,
O'erjoy'd was he to find
That though on pleaſure ſhe was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaiſe was brought,
But yet was not allow'd
To drive up to the door, leſt all
Should ſay that ſhe was proud.

So three doors off the chaiſe was ſtay'd,
Where they did all get in,
Six precious ſouls, and all agog
To daſh through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheel,
Were never folk ſo glad,
The ſtones did rattle underneath
As if Cheapſide were mad.

John Gilpin at his horſe's ſide
Seiz'd faſt the flowing mane,
And up he got in haſte to ride,
But ſoon came down again.

For ſaddle-tree ſcarce reach'd had he,
His journey to begin,
When turning round his head he ſaw,
Three cuſtomers come in.

So down he came, for loſs of time
Although it grieved him ſore,
Yet loſs of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas

'Twas long before the cuſtomers
Were ſuited to their mind,
When Betty ſcreaming came down ſtairs,
"The wine is left behind."

Good lack! quoth he, yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewiſe
In which I bear my truſty ſword
When I do exerciſe.

Now Miſtreſs Gilpin, careful ſoul,
Had two ſtone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that ſhe loved,
And keep it ſafe and ſound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew,
And hung a bottle on each ſide
To make his balance true.

Then

Then over all, that he might be
Equipp'd from top to toe,
His long red cloak well bruſh'd and neat,
He manfully did throw.

Now ſee him mounted once again
Upon his nimble ſteed,
Full ſlowly pacing o'er the ſtones
With caution and good heed.

But finding ſoon a ſmoother road
Beneath his well-ſhod feet,
The ſnorting beaſt began to trot,
Which gall'd him in his ſeat,

So, Fair and ſoftly, John he cried,
But John he cried in vain,
That trot became a gallop ſoon
In ſpite of curb and rein.

So ſtooping down, as needs he muſt
Who cannot ſit upright,
He graſp'd the mane with both his hands
And eke with all his might.

His horſe, who never in that ſort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin neck or nought,
Away went hat and wig,
He little dreamt when he ſet out
Of running ſuch a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like ſtreamer long and gay,
'Till loop and button failing both
At laſt it flew away.

Then might all people well diſcern
The bottles he had ſlung,
A bottle ſwinging at each ſide
As hath been ſaid or ſung.

The dogs did bark, the children ſcream'd,
Up flew the windows all,
And ev'ry ſoul cried out, Well done!
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he;
His fame ſoon ſpread around—
He carries weight, he rides a race,
'Tis for a thouſand pound.

And ſtill as faſt as he drew near,
'Twas wonderful to view
How in a trice the turnpike-men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now as he went bowing down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were ſhatter'd at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road
Moſt piteous to be ſeen,
Which made his horſe's flanks to ſmoke
As they had baſted been.

But ſtill he ſeem'd to carry weight,
With leathern girdle brac'd,
For all might ſee the bottle necks
Still dangling at his waiſt.

Thus all through merry Iſlington
Theſe gambols he did play,
And till he came unto the Waſh
Of Edmonton ſo gay.

And there he threw the waſh about
On both ſides of the way,
Juſt like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild-gooſe at play.

At Edmonton his loving wife
From the balcony ſpied
Her tender huſband, wond'ring much
To ſee how he did ride.

Stop, ſtop, John Gilpin!—Here's the houſe—
They all at once did cry,
The dinner waits and we are tir'd:—
Said Gilpin—ſo am I.

But yet his horſe was not a whit
Inclined to tarry there,
For why? his owner had a houſe
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So

So like an arrow ſwift he flew
  Shot by an archer ſtrong,
So did he fly—which brings me to
  The middle of my ſong.

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,
  And ſore againſt his will,
Till at his friend's the Callender's
  His horſe at laſt ſtood ſtill.

The Callender amazed to ſee
  His neighbour in ſuch trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
  And thus accoſted him—

What news? what news? your tidings tell,
  Tell me you muſt and ſhall—
Say why bare-headed you are come,
  Or why you come at all?

Now Gilpin had a pleaſant wit
And loved a timely joke,
And thus unto the Callender
In merry guiſe he ſpoke—

I came becauſe your horſe would come;
And if I well forebode,
My hat and wig will ſoon be here,
They are upon the road.

The Callender, right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Return'd him not a ſingle word,
But to the houſe went in.

Whence ſtraight he came with hat and wig,
A wig that flow'd behind,
A hat not much the worſe for wear,
Each comely in its kind.

He

He held them up, and in his turn
Thus ſhow'd his ready wit,
—My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs muſt fit.

But let me ſcrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face;
And ſtop and eat, for well you may
Be in a hungry caſe.

Said John—It is my wedding-day,
And all the world would ſtare,
If wife ſhould dine at Edmonton
And I ſhould dine at Ware.

So turning to his horſe, he ſaid,
I am in haſte to dine,
'Twas for your pleaſure you came here,
You ſhall go back for mine.

Ah luckleſs ſpeech, and bootleſs boaſt!
For which he paid full dear,
For while he ſpake a braying aſs
Did ſing moſt loud and clear.

Whereat his horſe did ſnort as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And gallop'd off with all his might
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig;
He loſt them ſooner than at firſt,
For why? they were too big.

Now Miſtreſs Gilpin, when ſhe ſaw
Her huſband poſting down
Into the country far away,
She pull'd out half a crown;

And thus unto the youth ſhe ſaid
That drove them to the Bell,
This ſhall be yours when you bring back
My huſband ſafe and well.

The youth did ride, and ſoon did meet
John coming back amain,
Whom in a trice he tried to ſtop
By catching at his rein.

But not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frighted ſteed he frighted more,
And made him faſter run.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went poſt-boy at his heels,
The poſt-boy's horſe right glad to miſs
The lumb'ring of the wheels.

Six Gentlemen upon the road
Thus ſeeing Gilpin fly,
With poſt-boy ſcamp'ring in the rear,
They rais'd the hue and cry:

Stop thief, ſtop thief—a highwayman!
Not one of them was mute,
And all and each that paſs'd that way
Did join in the purſuit.

And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in ſhort ſpace,
The toll-men thinking as before
That Gilpin rode a race.

And ſo he did and won it too,
For he got firſt to town,
Nor ſtopp'd 'till where he had got up
He did again get down.

Now let us ſing, Long live the king,
And Gilpin long live he,
And when he next doth ride abroad,
May I be there to ſee!

FINIS.

CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME OF Mr. COWPER's POEMS.

1 TABLE Talk
2 Progreſs of Error
3 Truth
4 Expoſtulation
5 Hope
6 Charity
7 Converſation
8 Retirement
9 The Doves
10 A Table
11 A Compariſon
12 Verſes ſuppoſed to be written by A. Selkirk, during his ſolitary Abode in the Iſland of Juan Fernandes.
13 On the Promotion of Lord Thurlow
14 Ode to Peace
15 Human Frailty
16 The Modern Patriot
17 On obſerving ſome Name of little note recorded in the Biographia Britannica
18 Report of an adjudged Caſe
19 On the Burning of Lord Mansfield's Library
20 On the ſame
21 The Love of the World reproved
22 The Lily and the Ro
23 Idem Latine Redditum
24 The Nightſhade and Glow Worm
25 Voture
26 On a Goldfinch ſtarved in a Cage
27 Horace, Book II. Ode X.
28 Reflection on ditto
29 Tranſlation from V. Bourn
30 The Shrubbery
31 The Winter Noſegay
32 Mutual Forbearance
33 To the Rev. Mr. Newton
34 Tranſlation of Prior's Chloe and Euphalia
35 Boadicea
36 Heroiſm
37 The Poet, the Oyſter, and the Senſitive Plant
38 To the Rev. Mr. Unwin

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